

THE
RURAL INDUSTRIES
ROUND OXFORD

A SURVEY

MADE ON BEHALF OF THE INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

BY

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PREFACE

THE history of rural England during the last two centuries is closely bound up with the development of the nation as a whole. When this fact is recognized it is frequently stated in terms of theory or of policy. It is sometimes said, for instance, that the towns have developed at the expense of the villages, or that other industries have been fostered at the expense of agriculture. Without discussing the general question as to the importance of conscious direction of the economic, political, and social development of national life in the period in which modern England was in the making, it may be said that persons who are now interested in the re-population of the countryside are apt to underrate the importance of causes which brought about results far more important and far-reaching than those the persons who originated the causes ever dreamed of. Many who are interested in the development of country life see their chief friends and antagonists in persons and their policies, and pay little attention to natural forces, or to economic and social forces which have results not consciously sought by their originators and directors. The fallacy of this view is never more evident than during a consideration of the present condition of rural industries. When Hargreaves patented the spinning-jenny, Arkwright the water-frame, Crompton the mule, and Watt the steam-engine, they had no ill-will against the woollen industries in the south-western counties, nor any particular predilection in favour of the northern counties ; yet these inventions changed the whole economic and social structure of both those areas. Stephenson was not dominated by a theory that men could live better lives when congregated in large towns than scattered over the country when he applied the steam-engine to railroad traction, yet his work was to a large extent the cause of the later increases in the mass of urban population in this country. The Hungarian inventors of

the system of milling by steel rollers were not at all concerned about giving the Canadian and American millers any advantage over English producers, yet their system was the direct cause of changes in the distribution of the milling industry in this country. The improvers of wood-working machinery in comparatively recent times were not actuated by any desire to depress the small wood-working establishments in the woodland areas of this country, though doubtless some of them were anxious to improve the market for imported timbers, yet their machinery deprived many English woodworkers of their sources of livelihood. The effects of forces such as these can be limited, or delayed, extended or facilitated, by political action or business organization. Sometimes limitation or delay is necessary, so that social chaos may be avoided, or that worthy persons or classes may not suffer unnecessarily from the effects of forces which are beyond their unassisted control. Action through political channels, and sometimes through business organization, is too apt to be of a negative character, and oft-times society as a whole would obtain more benefit and particular classes suffer less if action were positive and constructive rather than merely regulative or repressive. Instead of attempting to limit the action of progressive forces, and to maintain existing systems and organizations, for the benefit of individuals or classes, it would be more beneficial to enable such as are likely to suffer to make use of the improvements as they become accessible. This is not at all impossible, for in the case of wood-working, the very machinery and methods of organization which put many small village timber-yards out of business have, in recent years, made it possible to establish others on a very profitable basis. Indeed, wherever the small industries in rural areas have maintained their position when methods of production or commercial organizations were changing, it was by adapting their own methods to the new general conditions.

The dominant factor in the industrial development of England from 1760 to the end of the nineteenth century

was the use of steam-power, and the extension of the use of machinery which this made possible. The transference of the textile industries from scattered areas to the northern counties between 1780 and 1830 was largely due to the existence of water-power in the new centres, but fortunately for those who established productive enterprises in the northern counties coal was available in the localities when the new form of power became of practical use. In recent years, however, the use of oil-fuel, and the improvement of the internal combustion engine has to a small extent changed the conditions of industrial production. This change is altogether in favour of the small establishment, and in favour of such establishments as are situated in rural or semi-rural areas. The tendency towards mass-production with high-power equipment in general industry has always been attended to some extent by a tendency to develop small shops for the making of small accessories, for using certain by-products, or for repair purposes, and it has never applied to all lines of production. Moreover, mass-production has certain evident weaknesses, as, for instance in regard to workmanship and general finish of products, often of design, sometimes of durability, and not infrequently of the power to arouse a stable demand. These conditions, again, are in favour of the small shop, and as far as they are efficiently organized, in favour of the smaller rural establishments. Here there are no questions of personal or political predilections, but merely the consideration of mechanical inventions, and of economic organization, which may, quite accurately, be called natural forces.

The development of machine and power production was accompanied by somewhat similar changes in transport, marketing, and the general distribution of goods. The result of this on the distributive agencies which existed in rural districts was quite as disastrous as the effect of the changes in industrial organization on the productive enterprises. The railways gave a strong fillip to long-distance transport, and the rural industries suffered in exactly the same way as agriculture from the small bulk of their produce

PREFACE

and the comparatively short distances to be covered. Their competitors were able to supply goods in large bulk for long-distance transport, and were able to get the advantage of comparatively low freight rates. The small country enterprise which could not use the railways, except at some disadvantage, did not find improved facilities for local transport. There is now some prospect of change even here, for there are indications that motor transport may bring developments similar to those which the internal combustion engine for stationary power has already effected, and which are now extending. The village carriers, in many cases, are substituting small motors for the old horse vans, and, as will be seen in the reports on industries, the motor is being used for the necessary transport connected with small businesses in rural areas. At present there is much to be done in regard to supply and price of motors for the purposes of rural transport, and also great need for organization of traffic—possibly in more than one form. With changes in the organization of production and transport, the distributive agencies in rural districts are to some extent modified. The villages, even the larger ones, are no longer self-supplying centres to the extent they used to be. The town has gone to the village and the village to the town. Even the most typical of the modern distributive agencies of the town—the multiple shop—has reached the village. The cycle, the train, in some areas the tram-car, and, more recently and perhaps most important, the motor-bus, have carried the villagers to the town. The fleets of motor-buses which ply between town and town, as in Warwickshire and Herefordshire, have changed the whole character of country trading so far as family requirements are concerned. They have not yet done much for the commercial side of production, but the time is not far distant when motor-lorries connected with fleets of passenger buses will call for consignments of goods in many of the larger villages, and carry them to centres where they can be dispatched considerable distances either by train or by other motor services. The commercial organization in many rural areas is changing

and is turning rather in favour of village enterprise than against it.

It is yet early to attempt any indication of the influence which the development of electrical power may have upon facilities for production or transport in the countryside, but the probabilities are that any increase in the practical possibilities of electrical power will only accentuate the tendencies now shown as a result of the use of the internal combustion engine both for stationary power and for transport.

Where it has not already gone beyond recognition the village as an isolated economic unit is fast disappearing. The village producer and trader of the future has to take his place in the great business organization of the nation, buying in any markets in which materials are to be obtained or selling wherever products are required.

The essential problems of the development of rural industries are of a technical and business nature. Questions of public policy and administration are quite secondary, and their importance is due only to their connexion with the technical and business problems. Indeed, as the methods of public action are to some extent clumsy, cumbersome, and slow when directed to constructive ends, the wish might be expressed that personal and associated enterprise would make it unnecessary for public authorities to play any part in such development. But, it should be clearly understood, the present indications are that it is constructive rather than regulative action which is required at the present time, and that individuals and voluntary associations must play a large and vital part if any extension of industries other than agriculture is to be secured in rural areas. This is not to say that the State or local authorities cannot take any part in the organization which will be necessary if industrial opportunities in rural areas are to be increased, but merely to emphasize the fact that all the work required is essentially constructive in character. Common effort and close co-operation of all the agencies concerned can alone make the progress which is desired. At present some of the agencies

are weak, especially the local ones. But as John Stuart Mill stated nearly a century ago : ‘ Works of all sorts are daily accomplished by civilized nations, not by any greatness of faculty in the agents, but through the fact that each is able to rely with certainty on the others for the portion of the work which they respectively undertake. The peculiar characteristic of civilized beings is the capacity of co-operation ; and this tends to improve by practice, and becomes capable of assuming a constantly wider sphere of action.’

The future of rural industries appears largely to depend upon the use of local resources and upon supplying the requirements of a local market, but this does not comprise the whole of the situation. The household for the household, the village for the village, the town for the town, are ideals which go down before invention, which does not even stop at the nation for the nation. And the dynamic invention may be one in technical skill, mechanical appliances, or business organization. Trade is always overflowing political boundaries and even barriers, and if the trade of the villages does not flow into the towns that of the towns is certain to flow into the villages. It may be possible that in the revolution of economic principles and systems which is now being made by all sorts and conditions of persons certain human advantages in rural industries may be set against the greater production of goods by the larger industrial units of the towns. In particular, the smaller industrial concern enables a man to see the whole series of connexions between the making and the using of an article, and brings his work into direct relation not only with his own life, but with that of the community of which he is a member. There is little or no distinction between producer and consumer and one of the chief causes of present social conflicts is non-existent. The worker in the country ‘ sees the nature of what he is doing ; he is getting products from the land and making them of use by industry. He sees the whole process, and the fact is plain that labour and land are for the sake of himself and others like himself who need the goods. He sees the grain become flour, the wood from the forest become

furniture, the hide become leather, and the leather boots, and the wool cloth—all beside him, and all of it a plain process of natural goods made useful by men.'¹ The men of the towns, however, have a genius for organization, and if it were necessary that their businesses should be arranged so that less specialization were necessary than at present, or that some of the evil effects of over-specialization were eliminated they may modify existing systems without seriously affecting their productivity. The only basis upon which rural industries can be firmly established is a high standard of technical knowledge and skill, suitable machinery and commercial organization.

The study summarized in the following chapters was undertaken by the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics at the suggestion of the Development Commissioners, who recommended a small grant for the purpose. It has been made in a district which lies within a radius of thirty miles from the city of Oxford. This district was chosen partly because of convenience of working, but also because it includes many and varied types of land, with the consequent variations in utilization, and in economic and social conditions. The main object of the study was to ascertain what rural industries existed, the reasons for their localization, their present position, and prospects of future development. In addition, however, attempts have been made to obtain information about industries which have existed in the district, and the reasons for their subsequent disappearance. In pursuance of the main object of the inquiry it became necessary to study the present position of the industries from several points of view, particularly those of commercial methods, the relations of employers and employees, and of general trade organization. In the sections of the reports dealing with these subjects it will be seen that rural industries do not present any isolated problems, rather that all industry, whether it be carried on in town or country, has many features in common.

¹ D. H. Macgregor, *The Evolution of Industry*, p. 24.

The small industries which exist in a district such as that covered by the inquiry are very varied in character, and no investigator could be expected to obtain a complete mastery of all the technical details connected with them. However, a considerable amount of very useful knowledge has been accumulated.

The inquiry has been carried out by Miss K. S. Woods, who had a very keen interest in the subject and much knowledge of some aspects of it, before starting the work, and for some time she worked in collaboration with Miss D. C. Biggs. Miss Woods has been fortunate in securing the confidence of the persons to whom it was necessary to apply for information, and in many cases they have taken much practical interest in the work, being anxious both to give of their knowledge and to enable Miss Woods to see actual processes carried on. The Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics is very much indebted to the many persons, too numerous to mention by name, who have given assistance to Miss Woods, and especially to those who live the busy life of village craftsman or trader who have given freely of their valuable time. Both the Institute and Miss Woods wish to record appreciation of services rendered by Miss Biggs especially in the villages of South Oxfordshire. During the early part of the period in which the inquiry was made Miss Biggs visited many craftsmen, and the detailed and complete information which she obtained from villages was evidence of her knowledge of village life, and of the confidence reposed in her by villagers.

The study of rural industries in the neighbourhood of Oxford could scarcely lead to conclusions applicable to the whole of the country, because of variations in local conditions, but there is every reason for believing that the information obtained sheds much light upon the general problems involved in providing opportunities for industrial activities in the villages of England. The inquiry has not been limited to what are sometimes, rather unnecessarily, described as 'crafts' but has covered industries in which the small workshop or the small factory exists. On the other hand,

such industries as blanket-making at Witney or (factory) chair-making at High Wycombe have been excluded, for here the general industrial organization does not differ in any essential feature from that to be found in many similar factories in large urban centres. The aim was the study of such industries as have a definite relation to the general conditions of the locality in which they exist by reason of the supply of raw materials, the existence of a local demand, or of some peculiar conditions as to the local supply of labour. The result of the inquiry is, briefly, that the future prospects of these industries depends chiefly upon the increase in technical knowledge of the methods of production of raw materials, or of processes for the manufacture of raw materials, and upon improvements in commercial organization, and that any healthy development will depend chiefly upon the efforts of those persons in the local areas who are directly interested in success or failure. These principles are common to all industries, but reference must be made to the summary and to the individual reports upon industries for information as to the parts which it appears possible for public authorities to play if industrial development in rural areas is required for general social purposes. The report has been prepared in such a form that a general summary of information and conclusions is available prior to the presentation of the more detailed reports on separate industries and their particular problems.

During the preparation of this Report for the press Miss Woods has been making similar investigations in other districts. More material has been obtained regarding some industries, and other points of view have emerged. In particular, the general trade depression has revealed several important considerations. This Report, however, shows the position in this area during the year 1919-20.

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OXFORD, December, 1920.

PART I

THE ECONOMICS OF RURAL INDUSTRIES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

RURAL industries have recently attracted a great deal of attention in connexion with problems of development and resettlement of rural areas. Arguments are brought forward both for and against any social attempts at developing them, and facts can be produced to support every one of these arguments. This shows the need for close investigation of the subject and careful sifting of evidence, as only in this way will it be possible to arrive at the facts concerning the present position, or to assess the part that small industries may play in rural development.

On the one side it is urged that a large rural population is essential to national vigour, and the closer settlement of our rural districts is one of the means by which it is hoped to improve the national physique. Rural industries, it is said, will allow more people to be supported on the land and more children to grow up in free and healthy surroundings.

It is also urged that we must produce more food, and that rural industries will make agricultural labour more attractive by providing pleasant and lucrative occupations for the many hours of bad weather and darkness which the farm workers and their wives spend unprofitably. Small-holders who could not support themselves entirely from their holdings will have other strings to their bows, and out of their earnings from industries they will be able to save capital and improve their holdings. It is said that few women can do whole-time work on the land. But in rural industries there will be other openings at home for the girls and young women; village life will be more varied and interesting; and the flight to the attractions of the town will be arrested.

Again, it is said that many articles now imported or made in the towns could quite well be manufactured in the country,

if only people were taught and stimulated to make things for home and local use. National economy would thus be served by a decrease in imports and setting free urban labour for manufacture for export.

It is further argued that as a substantial proportion of factory employees work in very small workshops or factories, many of these small-scale industries could, with proper organization, be as well carried on in rural districts as in and near the large towns. That a manufacturer who knows intimately every process carried on in his workshop as well as the commercial side of his business, who has served a thorough apprenticeship, and is personally acquainted with every worker on the premises, is a national asset of great value ; and that the training which can be given in such a business should be an essential part of a national education system. In the country, it is argued, a man is less shackled by regulations ; he can develop on his own lines, live a happy and independent life, and give to society the fruits of his individuality and initiative. By using machinery to lighten the more laborious tasks, but avoiding that minute subdivision of processes which kills interest and the sense of responsibility, the small-scale manufacturer can raise and uphold the standard of industry.

The handicrafts, we are told, are the basis of all industry, and a nation whose great industries lose touch with the manual processes on which they are founded, loses its vitality. Even in a big woollen mill it is on the hand-loom that new designs are worked out and experiments tried.

A further argument advanced in support of the development of rural industries is that there are many people capable of good work who cannot stand the noise and hurry of town and factory. They may need the peace and openness of the country for themselves, or perhaps for their families, but yet are unfitted to support themselves in agriculture, at any rate entirely.

Doctors have found in creative work a restorative to health of body and mind, and some would attribute industrial unrest, not to economic conditions but to the divorce of manual toil from the exercise of creative faculties. The cry of the worker for greater control of industry is not, we are told, merely a cry for better conditions, but for freedom to use something more than his limbs in the work in which so many hours of his life must be spent. Finding no scope in the deadly monotony of processes repeated a thousand times, he looks to the 'democratization of industry' to give

him, in common^{*} with his fellows, a field for exercising his higher faculties. But meanwhile, in the small-scale industry and little rural community, there is, it is contended, a field where social and industrial problems can be worked out with less difficulty and delay.

These are some of the arguments put forward not only by those who are concerned to see the restoration of the village craftsman at any sacrifice of economic efficiency, but also by many who believe that the little business is not necessarily an industrial anachronism.

On the other side, it is argued that Utopian dreams, however fair, can only come true if the people can earn enough without having to toil too waretily for the bare necessities of life. With regard to increased food production, it is urged that improved methods of agriculture are what is needed, and that capital should be sunk in farms and not in industries which will only add another burden to the agricultural labourer and his family. It is less and not more work that is needed.¹

It is explained that the competition of large-scale industry which causes a continual process of decline and collapse among the small-scale industries of similar character, is due to the superior economies which can be effected in the former. Economy in transport is effected by concentration in a good industrial centre, and by dealing with materials and products in bulk; economy in manufacture by the superior equipment which is possible in a large factory with regard to labour-saving machinery, and by the division of labour according to varying capacity in the workers; economy both in transport and in manufacture by close proximity to coal, the chief source of power; economy in commerce by advertising and by disposing rapidly of large quantities of produce, and by the facilities for keeping in touch with the fluctuations of the world market; economy in management by having a large amount of business dealt with by the same organizing staff. The large-scale industry therefore has the double advantage over the small-scale industry, of being able to supply the public with an article at a lower price, and the workers with higher wages for the same or a smaller amount of work.

Many other arguments are advanced against home

¹ The conditions under which home industries are carried on in combination with agricultural work abroad are not encouraging. See *Peasant Industry*, Education Pamphlet, No. 26, H.M.S.O. (1912); also *The Rural Problem*, by A. W. Ashby, Athenaeum Press.

industries. They are difficult to organize and peculiarly liable to sweating, and they tend to keep down wages by providing a subsidiary source of income. Time given to home industries can ill be spared from the care of home and children. In some cases they compete unfairly with other industries because they are done for 'pocket money'. Industries depend for success on regularity of output and the utmost economy in organization, and this is not easily attained in the country. It would be harmful to encourage home industries while cottages are so deficient, even for the needs of young families, and it is better at present that young people should find work away. As for village factories, if they can be developed economically, private enterprise will do it, and social organization is unnecessary and wasteful. Anyhow, we are told, the problem of rural industries only touches the fringe of the industrial and social problem. The number of people who can be supported on the land in England is strictly limited. Therefore, unless it can be shown that rural industries could assist, or at any rate not compete with, agriculture and food production, the chief argument falls to the ground. It is no use returning to mediaevalism. In the impoverished conditions of to-day, industry must be carried on with rigorous economy, and if we are to be a strong and happy nation we must see to it that our towns and our factories are healthy. The nation needs the countryside as a place for rest and refreshment. Give the town workers of all classes better facilities for country holidays and country dwellings, and do not attempt to promote industries under unsuitable conditions.

This is the outline of the case for the other side, and the deep divergence of opinion is a clear indication of the need for further consideration and research.

By making a careful investigation in a definite area, it is possible to show what are the actual conditions under which rural industries are carried on, and what are the opinions of the people most intimately concerned as to their function, their possibilities, and their needs. The interest shown by the various sections of the local population is very striking. A great deal of thought is being given to the subject, and in the numerous interviews with people of practical experience, attention was constantly drawn to the wider aspects of the question, and it has been possible to study rural industries in relation not only to agriculture and rural life, but to urban production and foreign trade, and to consider their functions in the national economy.

In a contemporary survey it is difficult to separate passing from more lasting influences, and war conditions made it especially difficult in this investigation. But it seems that in many cases these influences only accentuated tendencies which might otherwise have passed unnoticed or would have been difficult to trace to their causes. There is certainly a striking resemblance between the conclusions drawn from this inquiry and those which may be gathered from studying reports on rural industries in Scotland, Germany, and other parts of England. Although great attention is being paid to industrial and social conditions in towns, literature on the subject of rural industries is scanty, and yet this is a branch of sociology which ought not to be neglected. In spite of the limited scope of this inquiry and the need for further investigation along certain lines, it is suggested that sufficient facts have been collected to show the main principles underlying the problems of rural industries which must be the foundation on which practical measures should be based.

The Area and the Industries Investigated

The Area. The investigation covered the period March 1919 to March 1920. Taking an area with Oxford as its centre and a radius of thirty miles, a district was covered which is fairly typical of agricultural England. Its geographical variations are considerable. It includes the sparsely populated uplands of the Cotswolds and the Berkshire Downs; the river valleys of the Thames and Kennet and their tributary streams; the woodlands of North Hampshire, South Berkshire, Wychwood, and the Chiltern ridge—all differing in character—and the comparatively timberless regions of North Oxfordshire and Mid-Berkshire. The size of holdings and systems of farming vary considerably over the area under investigation, and with them the type of labour available for agriculture and other occupations.

In spite of the absence of large industrial towns, the urban elements of Reading, Banbury, Swindon, Wycombe, and Oxford itself have an important bearing on the rural districts surrounding them. The smaller market towns are also important in view of their present and future position as rural centres. The residential population must also be taken into consideration in its effect on labour and markets.

The Industries. As far as the individual industries themselves are concerned, other districts, in which the same class of industry is carried on, might have provided more fruitful

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fields for study in particular cases. It is also possible that other districts of the same size might have given as much variety, but there is now so little trade isolation that inquiries made in one locality frequently bring out facts concerning other parts of the country.

The types of industries which have been found in this district are :

GROUP I

INDUSTRIES OWNING THEIR EXISTENCE MAINLY TO LOCAL MATERIAL

A. *Quarrying and Mining, and Brickworks.*

B. *Food Production and Conservation.*

C. *The Underwood Industries :*

(1) Wood-cutting and sorting, and making of faggots.

Barrel-hoops.

Crate-rods.

Rakes.

Hurdles.

Sheep cribs.

Ladders.

Besoms.

(2) Underwood turnery, including the manufacture of :

Mop-sticks and garden-implement handles.

Brushwood ware.

Chairs, &c.

D. *Timber Industries :*

(1) The by-industries of saw-mills, including the manufacture of :

Wheels.

Wheelbarrows.

Wooden toys.

Boxes, &c.

(2) Chair manufacture and chair-leg turnery.

(3) Bowl turnery.

E. *Osier-growing and Basket-making.*

GROUP II

INDUSTRIES OWNING THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL MARKET

The Village Repairing and Manufacturing Workshops :

Wheelwrights and carpenters.¹

Turners for builders and carpenters.

Smiths, farriers, and agricultural implement makers.

Saddlers.

Tin-smiths.

Wagon-sheet makers and repairers.

Halter makers.

Dressmakers and bespoke tailors.

¹ See pp. 45-49. Supplying of Agricultural Needs.

GROUP III

INDUSTRIES WHICH DO NOT DEPEND ON LOCAL MATERIAL OR MARKET, BUT ON THE LOCAL SUPPLY OF LABOUR

- Leather-dressing.
- Glove-making.
- Ready-made clothing.
- Knitting.
- Lace-making.
- Plush-making.

GROUP IV

INDUSTRIES WHICH DEPEND ON THE SUPPLY OF WATER

- Paper mills.
- Cloth mills.
- Blanket mills.
- Carpet manufacture.
- Boat-building.

GROUP V

A FEW INDUSTRIES ALMOST EXTINCT AS RURAL INDUSTRIES

- Brush-making.
- Rope-making.
- Cooperage.

GROUP VI

INDUSTRIES REVIVED OR RECENTLY STARTED, SUCH AS

- Weaving.
- Rabbit-skin glove-making.
- Rush basket-making, &c.

The above classification has been made for convenience, but some industries might more correctly be included in a different group ; e. g. leather-dressing may depend on the demand of the local glove factories or other uses of leather or on a supply of hides from local abattoirs, and basket-making depends on the local market even more than on local material.

Detailed investigation has not been attempted in all the industries. Quarrying, mining, and brickworks have been omitted as beyond the scope of this investigation, and also all the industries concerned with food-production and conservation. The bearing, however, of rural industries on food-production is discussed. Other industries which form an important part of rural economy are building, the manufacture of agricultural implements, and the work done in village saddlaries, smithies, and joineries ; the organization of village retail trade is also important. Although no separate reports have been made on these, a good deal of information has been

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collected which is valuable in throwing light on the position and functions of rural industries and reference will be made to them where necessary. Investigation of paper mills and brush-making has been deferred, because these can better be studied in other rural districts where there are more examples. Boat-building has also been omitted as having no particular importance with regard to local material or rural demand.

Detailed reports are given in Part II of (1) the underwood and timber industries ; (2) basket-making ; (3) gloving and other industries employing mostly women. Leather-dressing for gloves is also included in this section.

CHAPTER II

CONDITIONS IN RURAL INDUSTRIES

TAKING the investigated area as roughly fifty miles square, the industries are very few, and except for the repairing and manufacturing workshops the vast majority of villages have none at all.

Underwood industries are carried on in the Kennet district, where material is abundant and railway communication good; chair-making close to the beech-woods of the Chilterns; hurdle-making distributed over the district; besoms are made close to the birch-woods of Tadley and Baughurst; barrel-hoops, crate-rods, pill-boxes, rakes, and wooden bowls by a few craftsmen of the Kennet woods. Gloving has survived where agricultural wages have been low and there has been no other industry for women. Ready-made tailoring is done in a few villages near the factories at Oxford and Abingdon. Plush is still hand-woven in a village near Banbury; the Abingdon hand-looms are still in use for carpets and matting, and 'halter-heads' or head stalls are woven by hand, the reins being made in the old rope-walks. Lace-making is done in the east of Oxfordshire, and hand-machine knitting in several villages and small towns. Basket-making is done in the small towns, and in a few remote villages where there are still some derelict osier-beds, the most extensive osier-beds in the district being in the Kennet valley. Wooden boxes, toys, wheels, and other small articles are made in or near a few of the saw-mills.

Present Position of Trades

Of the small woodland crafts, besoms have the best market, being used in iron-works to brush the iron from the slag, and also in factories and collieries; for garden use the demand is seasonal. Hurdles are being sent to the north of England and to Scotland. Barrel-hoops are wanted for sugar and fish barrels, but very few woodmen are making them; the trade is a fluctuating one. There is a demand for rakes, but only two rake-makers were found. The village pill-box turner has no difficulty in selling all he can make in spite of competition from factories, where automatic lathes are used. The bowl-turner was busy supplying London shops and fulfilling Government orders. Turnery is expanding, and there is a ready sale for chairs, toys, and household articles of various kinds. The

demand for the staple products—implement handles and mop-sticks—is said to be abnormal, and firms are prepared to develop, as the most successful firm has done, on side lines, in expectation of resumed competition from Norway and America in the staple trade. There is a boom in the chair industry and the demand cannot wholly be met. But the present demand for wooden articles represents a four or five years' shortage, and cannot be taken as a criterion for the future when conditions are normal. The shortage of labour in the underwood industries is limited by a shortage of material ; while the latter is acute there is not room for many more workers.

In the needlework industries, the demand for gloves is keen and material and labour scarce ; the demand for clothing is also keen, and outworkers are being kept on and new ones engaged as a temporary expedient. There is also a keen demand for knitted goods, owing partly to the great expense and poor quality of woven goods and cloth. There is a sale for certain classes of lace, but the younger women will not learn to make it, though in some villages the rising price given for the cheaper varieties is attracting new workers.

In the repairing and manufacturing workshops there is a tendency to dispense with paid labour and to keep the business in the family, using labour-saving machinery where possible. It is difficult to get apprentices, and they are often said to be unsatisfactory. Objections are made to the high wages or piece-rates fixed by the Trade Unions, seldom on the grounds that they are too high in themselves, but frequently on the grounds that the men are not worth the cost and that fixed hours are inconvenient in a repairing shop. The shortage of good shoeing smiths was apparent even before the war. Wheelwrighting and carpentry, cobbling, cooperage, and farriery, have become to a great extent merely repairing businesses, owing to the use of power and the development of machinery which can turn out 'parts' in great quantities. This tendency is, however, to some extent reversed by the use of small engines of various kinds.

Osier-growing is said to be one of the most profitable forms of cultivation, and individual basket-makers as well as basket-making firms in many cases wish to own osier-beds where there is suitable land. Basket-making pays well if carried on in close proximity to a market, and every small town provides a market for a variety of baskets.

In Oxford itself there is said to be a good opening for a basket-factory.¹

Trade Organization and Capitalization

With regard to organization, rural industries are of two classes, first, the factory type in which there is a definite division into employers and employed ; secondly, the workshop type in which the master craftsman may or may not have employees, and in which journeymen set up for themselves if the opportunity comes. In the first group the workers sell their labour ; in the second group they sell their wares. Women's home industries sometimes belong to the first group, the workers being connected with a factory, as in gloving and tailoring ; sometimes to the second group, as in lace-making and knitting.

In the first group, employees in paper-mills, turneries, the larger basket-works, chair, cloth, and glove factories, belong to trade unions in most cases ; outworkers for the clothing factories are also organized, and in the gloving trade organization of outworkers is increasing.

In the second group, there is little or no organization except among the farriers. The Master Farriers' Association, which covers the whole country, is 10,000 strong, and there are small local associations as well. The employees in this industry are also organized on a national scale. This shows that trade-unionism can work in the small shops. But it does not, in its normal form, quite meet the needs of the small craftsmen and craftswomen. The fixing of wages and piece-rates leads to the fixing of prices, as in the basket and smithing trades. But in industries where the employees are very few in relation to master workers, or where there are none, attempts at organization for the purpose of fixing prices meet with little success. This is partly due to the character of small craftsmen. There is a remarkable dislike to raising prices to old customers, and when the customers are farmers it is difficult to do so. Employers have, or may be supposed to have, in a time of booming trade, the power of raising their prices to meet the extra wages bill, and employees organized in a big union have a mass of support

¹ The investigation was carried on during the abnormal conditions resulting from the war, the scarcity of imports effecting what was practically a system of protection. To rely upon any definite forecast with regard to particular industries would be as rash during the present period of depression as it was during the boom. Manufacturers still express great uncertainty.—Jan. 1921.

behind them. But independent craftsmen are too scattered and the expense of organization is too heavy for them to be in a strong position. The farriers have not altogether succeeded in meeting these difficulties. Effective organization would therefore have to be on a wider basis than for each craft alone, and some form of co-operative organization, open to all the independent workers in a district, would appear to be the most practical solution. It is admitted by craftsmen, trade union organizers, and others of experience that there is at present no type of organization which quite meets the needs of this peculiarly unprotected class of workers.

The types of firms investigated can roughly be divided into two :

- (1) Businesses which have been built up from a small workshop on the turnover, and are under the management of a practical craftsman.
- (2) Factories or branches which have been transplanted from elsewhere.

Although in some cases, masters of the former class have been harsh employers, yet they are frequently men who show by their enterprise and ability that they could have made good use of more capital. One of the most notable cases of expansion was due as much to a sudden windfall which provided capital as to the qualities of the manufacturer. Producers whose businesses have expanded express the opinion that credit banks would have been useful ; craftsmen who have to wait a considerable time before getting a return are sometimes of the same opinion. Family expenses are greatest just at the time when capital would be most useful. It may be needed for laying in a stock of material, opening a shop, setting up machinery, or acquiring land. In many cases the additional calling of publican or job-master gives the craftsman extra funds so that he can buy advantageously. In the Newbury district, the overtime earnings for harvest, paid in a lump at Michaelmas, may be spent at the November sales, and thus a labourer becomes an independent craftsman or a wood dealer. But the money is often needed for winter clothing or other family requirements. The custom, however, of paying only a small deposit at the time of purchase, and the remainder the following Michaelmas, makes it comparatively easy for the woodmen of this district to become 'capitalists'. Craftsmen, on the other hand, who do not contemplate expansion do not wish for greater credit facilities, and there is amongst many a dislike of borrowing.

The neglect of markets and the low standard of commercial ability appear to be intimately connected with lack of capital. Industries carried on by dispersed workers on a small scale are of a type in which commercial capitalization must be heavy. In a large concentrated industry, based on large sales and quick returns, raw material is passed as quickly as possible through the mill and the finished article placed speedily on the market. The margin of profit may be small, but the wholesale merchant provides the commercial capital, is responsible for the sales, and takes a profit too. It has been seen that rural industries can seldom compete with industries of this class, but must produce articles of a better or more distinctive quality for a limited market. Generally speaking, the higher the price, the longer must goods be held in stock, and the longer is the period between buying the material and selling the product. If the commercial side of an industry is in the hands of under-capitalized dealers or employers, wages are apt to be cut down to a minimum, to enable them to meet the expenses incurred in waiting. The lace industry gives examples of this, and also the small retail shop which buys local products and must take a high commission if the goods are held. The case of the underwood dealers may be cited as an example of the function of middleman being fulfilled by a small capitalist to the convenience of woodmen, craftsmen, and buyers alike. In this case the market for underwood is near, and the evil of the middleman being the only person in touch with the market is avoided.

Power and Machinery

The development of small portable steam-engines, which utilize waste wood for fuel, is assisting the revival of wood industries, in the vicinity of the material, and the use of small oil, gas, and petrol internal combustion engines is to some extent helping to reinstate the village carpenter's shop, smithy, saddlery, and even the bootmaker's shop as a manufacturing as well as a repairing business. But the development of large-scale machinery which can turn out goods or parts by the thousand by means of automatic tools, acts in the opposite direction and the local workshop is likely, so far as implements are concerned, to be a place where parts are put together and supplemented, rather than a complete manufactory. The local bicycle and motor shop gives an example of a maker who is in reality an agent. Farriers and implement-makers are in somewhat the same position,

especially when patent machinery is used. The small engine which can work lathe or saw, or grind corn indiscriminately, is welcome to the craftsman as making him independent of labour. Electricity, it is said, will be the saving of the small industry, and great interest is shown in the possibilities of development.

Material

Shortage of material is felt in every industry. In some cases it is attributed to the action of 'combines'—for instance, in iron ; in others it is due to neglect in cultivation and the ignorance of those who could cultivate, and the fact that the land is not in the hands of the persons chiefly interested in its cultivation.¹

The quality of the material has in many cases an effect on the amount of labour entailed in making it up ; osiers and copse-wood, for instance, if well grown, can be worked with less labour as well as less waste. Transport expenses can be borne on good material which cannot be borne on waste. We find, as a consequence, a desire on the part of the manufacturer in some cases to control the cultivation or production of his material. We find also that the small producer can in some cases only succeed if he is independent of big merchants for his materials. Cases of a manufacturer who would not join a trade organization being boycotted by sellers of material through trade union pressure, have been reported in three industries.

The small manufacturer or single-handed craftsman is frequently at a disadvantage, owing to his lack of ready money at times when materials are cheap. It is said that he can usually obtain credit, but there is more willingness to sell to a man who will pay at once, and a man who cannot do so is frequently the man who cannot afford to take risks.

The most striking example of waste material which might be used industrially is found in the saw-mills. Where the engines have furnaces suitable for consuming the wood offal, including sawdust, the waste is not so great, but considering the opening for toys and small articles of furniture, it is worthy of consideration whether the establishment of industries which utilize small pieces of wood would enable a saw-mill or turnery works to pay, in places where it might not pay otherwise.

¹ See *post*, p. 87.

Quality of Products

It is demonstrated in many instances that rural industries cannot afford the cost of administration in an output of poor quality and low value. Industries which have attempted to compete in the same class of goods which can be turned out in great quantities in big factories have only survived by sweating the workers, and this has reacted on the quality of output and debased it. Industries which flourish either serve their local market well, or some other market which they have 'captured' and kept by their reputation for quality.

Methods of Selling and Markets

The methods by which country craftsmen sell their goods are primitive and unorganized. The local market is reached still in some instances by hawking, though the railway service has largely superseded this method, goods being sent to shops which used to be visited personally with a pony-cart or on foot. Occasionally craftsmen take their wares to local market-places, but it is more usual for them to sell to a retailer or to have a shop of their own in the market town or in a fair-sized village. There does not seem to be much trade with wholesale merchants at a distance, though there are exceptions where a good trade is done.

Buyers visit the villages for lace just as eggliers or higgler buy up eggs and fruit. A builder's merchant is in touch with the smiths and carpenters of a wide area in Berkshire, doing them a service by putting them in touch with a market for such small articles as doorplates and latches. This he can do on a 5 per cent. commission. Lace buyers were taking 10 per cent., though in one case, where the buyer was a grocer who had anyhow to travel round these villages, the percentage was 5 per cent. The commission made by retailers varies according to the class of goods and the demand, the general rule being, the longer the goods are likely to be in stock the higher the commission. It is found that in some cases better rates can be obtained by selling to the West End shops, though the commission may amount to as much as one half the retail price, than at local shops, where the commission may be 25 to 30 per cent.

There is a deplorable lack of enterprise and of commercial ability in the villages and small towns, though there are exceptions which show the possibility of expanding an

industry by serving first the local market and gradually making connexions farther afield.

It is found that in several instances the man who sells to farmers only is worse off than the man who sells to other classes. Racing-hurdles pay better than sheep-hurdles ; household baskets better than agricultural baskets ; shoeing hunters pays better than shoeing farm horses. But the local household market, a promising field for a number of industries, is served badly by the village shops, and in the small towns there are few retailers who take advantage of local resources. The shops are supplied by commercial travellers, and there are still instances of peddling at farm houses and cottages and selling clothing and other goods on credit, payment being made in instalments. This practice, however, is declining, and more shopping is done at the nearest town. The most flourishing basket-makers are those who have a retail shop in which to display samples. They repair and make to order and supplement what they cannot profitably make by buying from wholesale dealers or larger firms with whom they also deal for material. In other cases retailers employ craftsmen on the premises ; ironmongers, for instance, occasionally employ basket-makers or halter-makers ; and wool and fancy-needlework shopkeepers employ knitters. Amongst small craftsmen sales are more often made direct to retailers than to wholesale merchants, the connexion having grown out of the old custom of driving to market, often over very long distances, and hawking goods to shops. In cases where the retailer buys from a local craftsman or craftswoman the price is apt to be beaten down very low, the shopman looking for cheapness rather than quality. It must be remembered, however, that bad debts are often incurred by the small shopman, which makes his position difficult. A good retailer, who takes the trouble to find out reliable craftsmen and to stock good articles, has a good effect on local industries, and connexions of this kind are kept up for many years. There is scarcely any co-operative effort in putting local products on the market.

Transport

The development of long-distance transport and the neglect of local transport is one of the determining factors of the concentration of industry in industrial centres. But the use of bicycles and motors has brought great changes in rural districts, and increased the importance of the small town or large village which is within easy reach of the

surrounding country. If transport facilities could be systematically developed according to geographical and economic conditions, linking up the smaller villages by better roads and good motor service to the nearest convenient town, and connecting those local centres with larger centres, one of the greatest disabilities of rural industries would be removed. Workers, especially girls, who depend on bicycles or on walking are apt to keep irregular time, and the shortage of houses makes lodgings almost prohibitive. Some saw-mills, for instance, would increase their manufacture of by-products if the requisite labour could be transported. The use of motors for passenger traffic tends to increase the industrial and commercial importance of the towns and larger villages by collecting factory workers and shoppers ; their use for collecting and distributing goods acts to some extent in the reverse direction, stimulating industries which are dispersed over the villages on their routes. But the town or large village is in either case the centre for organization.

Housing

In country as in town, the housing shortage is preventing expansion in many cases. The smallness of the houses is one of the reasons for trade-union objections to home industries ; until cottages have a room apart for a workshop they say it is undesirable. Some firms are buying land for the purpose of building houses for their employees. In connexion with housing, building as a rural industry needs special investigation.

Labour

(a) *Earnings.* Every one of these trades has been underpaid in the past, but there is improvement in every industry, though in certain crafts carried on in unsuitable places according to old-fashioned methods, or by workers of poor quality, it is still very low ; for instance, basket-making in isolated villages, where local osier-beds are derelict ; turnery on primitive lathes, in the neighbourhood of power-driven mills turning out similar articles ; or industries such as knitting done by women and girls with no power of organizing. The poor payment does not necessarily show that economic forces are driving the industries to the towns ; it is partly due to the fact that trade-union organization in rural districts is, practically speaking, a new development ; therefore, so far as the standard of life depends on trade-union effort it would be fairer to compare the condition

of the rural worker with that of the town worker of nearly a century ago than with that of the average worker to-day.

The improvement in earnings is attributable to several causes :

- (1) A better standard of wages for agricultural labour. With the present high prices, improvement is frequently denied, but there is no doubt that indigence is less common now than before the war, whatever the future position may be. The agricultural wage is constantly taken as a criterion for male workers, and industries judged according as they afford more or less earnings than agricultural labour.
- (2) Trade-union organization ; in most cases the influence is indirect, but in the case of gloving it appears to have created a revolution.
- (3) Trade Boards, or the threat of establishing a Trade Board. A number of trades have been added to the schedule of trades for which a trade board is to be established, and they are likely to cover the rural industries in which workers are distinctly wage-earners, though there is a danger of evasion by developing the kind of organization in which the worker is a seller, not of labour but of products.
- (4) A better market ; partly owing to the shortage of products and cessation of foreign competition during the war, and to Government contracts which have stimulated expansion ; partly due to an increased purchasing power amongst the working class, e. g. in clothing and in household fittings, a better type of article is now demanded than the 'cheap and nasty' type usually associated with sweating.

Complaints are often made that the payment of high wages for unskilled work has upset the labour market and prevented workers entering the skilled trades. No doubt this is the immediate effect. But a local sawyer and wood merchant who had given much thought to the economic questions connected with wood industries, raised an interesting point. He said that labour—that is to say, work which needs physical strength and endurance—had always been underpaid. 'Labourers are needed in every trade, and every skilled occupation depends on the labourer's strength. But the result of underpayment is that a labourer cannot afford to put his son to any other trade, and many of them become labourers who are not physically fit for the work. These men might have done well in such occupations as light

smiths' work or carpentry, but they had no chance, and when they ask for employment they say they can do anything, whereas they can do nothing.' This expresses a truth which is at the bottom of the trade-union pressure for levelling up the earnings of unskilled workers. It ought ultimately to work out for the good of industry, for employers will substitute machinery or skilled workers for expensive unskilled workers. Already the big wages given in the chair factories are increasing the demand for the better-made chair-legs of the turners in the villages round. It is being discovered that it is bad policy to produce vast quantities of poor chairs which are so hastily and badly put together that they will not stand use. Industries of this type are the result of employing unskilled or low skilled workers at low rates of payment. The poor quality of the work required in a large and cheap output is reputed as one of the causes of labour unrest. Another good result will be that higher earnings will attract men who excel in physical strength to the work for which they are specially fitted. The social slur which attaches to low skilled and deteriorated industries is intimately connected with underpayment, for great poverty creates a class which is cut off from other social classes who have more chance of 'keeping up appearances', which imply an accepted standard of cleanliness, decency, and associates.

(b) *Organization.* The term 'labour organization' as implying a division into two camps is not, in a great many cases, applicable to rural industries. There is no sharp social differentiation between master-craftsmen and journeymen, and even between the head of a small factory and the wage-earners who work beside him. There are understandings between various organizations connected with a trade which result in boycotting outsiders. Even if the organization is not strong enough for the boycotting to be effective, the movement illustrates the connexion between labour organization and trade 'combines', and there are also committees on Whitley Council lines which may consider questions not only of wages and hours, but any matter of importance to the trade as a whole.

The Government has played an important part in assisting and stimulating organization through the Trade Boards and the Reconstruction Committees. Trade Boards are set up in badly organized trades or in sections of trades to fix minimum rates for the prevention of 'sweating'. They are composed of representatives of employers and employed in the trade, with additional members appointed by the

Ministry of Labour. They consider other matters of industrial importance if requested by a government department to do so, and may delegate certain matters to local or other committees. During the war, Trade Board activities were in abeyance, but a large number of workers were affected by Government orders and after the war by the Wages (Temporary) Regulation Act. In 1918 the Ministry of Labour became responsible for the Trade Board Act, and for the Councils set up under the Whitley scheme. There was a want of elasticity with regard to learners' rates which acted hardly in some cases. It appears that Trade Board rates for learners should be graded more according to experience and efficiency than to age, so that adult or older learners may have a better chance of getting employment. If they reach the adult age before they have become proficient, employers are likely to discharge them, whereas they might be induced to keep on paying them at a learner's rate for a longer period until they were worth the adult rate. There is a Trade Board in the ready-made clothing trade. Conditions have greatly improved, trade-union organization has been stimulated, and there appears to have been little or no friction between employers and workers. But the rates will probably have the effect of stopping ready-made clothing as a rural industry. Under modern conditions, at any rate, it is not sound as a rural industry, as at present organized, the reason for its survival being a supply of labour which until recently was sweated. A number of new Trade Boards are being set up, and it seems that most badly paid trades will soon be covered. Dressmaking and rope, twine and net Trade Boards will affect rural employees, but will not assist directly those workers who buy their own material and are not therefore employees. Knitters and lace-makers need some other form of protection, so do dressmakers who are not employed.

Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committees are set up in industries not yet sufficiently well organized for the complete form of Industrial Council founded on the recommendations of the Whitley Report. They consist of equal numbers of representatives of associations of employers and of trade unions. Thus representation is by districts and not for the whole country. 'What form they should take must depend on the circumstances of each industry. What functions they should assume, and what they should leave or delegate to existing organizations or to specially created bodies, are also questions which must be determined

by those concerned. But it is not intended that these committees, any more than the permanent Joint Standing Industrial Councils, to which it is hoped they will lead, should confine themselves to the consideration of subjects specially referred to them by a Government Department.¹ A liaison officer from the Ministry of Labour is present at the meetings of the Reconstruction Committees. There are Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committees in the gloving, basket-making, and paper-making trades. These committees have not been established a year, but employers and employed speak very favourably of their working. By giving an opportunity for chosen representatives from different districts to meet at stated intervals, not only can troubles be forestalled, but many matters of interest, apart from wages and hours, can be discussed. Experience is gained of other advantages of association, apart from fighting strength. In the basket-making industry many of the masters have small workshops in rural districts. Their interests are not identical with those of the larger firms, but by belonging to the masters' association for their own district they have a chance of getting rural interests brought under discussion by the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee. It is most important that they should join the organization, for regulations which are necessary in town factories do not always apply to the country, yet lack of regulations is a danger to the standard of the trade.²

These committees have been criticized as being too centralized.³ They have not the triple organization of works council, district council, and national council, recommended in the Whitley Report, because they are set up in trades where organization is considered too backward for the local councils. It is too early yet to judge of their efficiency. Their decisions, unlike those of Trade Boards, have not the sanction of the law, and if there are large sections of the trade unorganized there is a loophole for sweating. But experience in the two industries investigated gives great reason for hope. If state-aided or state-stimulated organization is satisfactory in these cases, it might also be satisfactory in a type devised to fit the small crafts

¹ From the *Directory of Joint Standing Industrial Councils, Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committees, and Trade Boards*, issued by the Ministry of Labour.

² See pp. 145 and 126, *post*.

³ It is regrettable that from some districts the workers, being unorganized, do not send representatives to the I. I. R. C. so that it is, for that district, an Employers' Association merely.

and industries of a district. It will be all to the good if this can be effected without a preliminary gathering of the hosts into hostile camps. Centralization could be avoided by making the village or a small group of villages the unit for organization, combining them in a district organization of convenient size.

Training and Education

There is evidence to support the belief of many persons of practical experience with regard to rural industries that they are suffering from a lack of facilities both for general education and for technical training, and there appears to be both demand and necessity not only for better technical instruction but for general education as distinct from this. Sir Daniel Hall has expressed the general need in relation to the farmers : ‘ What the ordinary farmer needs above all things is better education ; and by this we mean not so much additional knowledge of a technical sort, but the more flexible habit of mind that comes with reading, the susceptibility to ideas that is acquired from acquaintance with a different atmosphere than the one in which he ordinarily lives.’ There is exactly the same need in the case of the people who control the rural industries. Problems of rural education cannot here be discussed in detail. It is only possible to indicate how far provisions for technical training are made, and in what way they fall short of what is needed.

Apprenticeship is declining, the period is being shortened, and learners are being taken instead of apprentices, for the following reasons :

1. Parents cannot afford apprenticeship. They seldom pay premiums,¹ and the youths are unwilling to forgo the earnings during the period of apprenticeship.
2. The big earnings in unskilled occupations are attractive to juveniles and their parents.
3. There is an unwillingness amongst juveniles to commit themselves to a vocation in the uncertainty and restlessness of to-day.
4. Rural life is considered too dull and its openings too few.
5. There is an unwillingness on the part of the craftsmen to teach the trade to many new workers for fear of an over-supply of labour lowering the prices.

¹ There are local charities or endowments which provide funds for apprenticing both boys and girls.

This is specially so in the case of the hurdle-making and basket-making trades. In the basket trade, however, restrictions imposed by the unions have been recently relaxed through the influence of the Interim Reconstruction Committee. The farmers' complaints of the scarcity of good hurdle-makers can be traced to the small earnings in the trade and the consequent disinclination to teach it.

6. There is in some cases a lack of the capacity to teach apprentices.

Learners are employees who for a limited period are working under supervision at lower rates than proficient employees. They may be juveniles or adults. Where there is a Trade Board or other form of trade organization, learners' rates are fixed according to age or period of experience. There are cases, notably in the dressmaking trade, in which the period allowed for older or adult learners is not long enough for them to acquire sufficient skill for employment at the adult minimum rate. This makes it difficult for girls who have been doing unskilled work, and at the age of sixteen or more wish to learn a trade, to get firms to employ them. They are at a far less teachable age than younger girls who come straight from school; but it is highly desirable that they should learn a skilled trade and they need special consideration. Not the least important function of the day continuation schools will be to keep boys and girls who have entered blind-alley occupations in a teachable frame of mind. The fear of lowering the standard of production by too easy entrance to the trade—a survival of gild spirit—is still strong, and the belief in a long period of apprenticeship as the only means of attaining proficiency is prevalent among craftsmen. But apprenticeship may be a wasteful method of exploiting cheap labour. The belief amongst some of the less educated smiths that a boy must be expected to lame a few horses before he becomes proficient, illustrates the folly of trusting to apprenticeship, without previous training, or some assurance that the master is also a teacher. Apprenticeship at its best means a practical and theoretical insight into the trade as a whole and not mere acquisition of technical skill in a single process. Apart from this all-round experience, skill can often be acquired by a person of general intelligence in a far shorter period than used to be considered necessary. Dexterity depends partly on a steady practice of a particular process, but also very largely on the lissomness of hand and

interest in the use of tools which should be acquired in childhood. There is a constant danger in spending too long a time over learning a skilled process, namely that the particular process may be superseded by machinery or by a change in the demand. This point may be illustrated in the case of hurdles; if a farmer sees little use in general education which has apparently deprived him of good hurdle-makers and thatchers, parents do not see the use of training boys to make hurdles if wire is likely to be used instead.

There is little provision for technical training or instruction under the education authorities. Evening classes in wood-work are popular and useful, and the work of the County Instructor in Farriery was much appreciated by the farriers and smiths. It is significant that the President of the Farriers' Association lays stress on education as the first need of this industry. Unfortunately, the instruction which prepared men for registration in farriery was dropped during the war, and has not yet been resumed. A scheme for instruction in saddlery, carpentry, and farriery, recently failed to win the support of the Oxfordshire Farmers' Union as being too costly, and possibly not effectual, and apprenticeship in village workshops was recommended instead. It has been seen, however, that youths will not go as apprentices to the village workshops, and it is evident that public funds must be forthcoming if good training is to be given in skilled occupations.

Training in the workshop alone is impracticable and unsatisfactory. But to dispense entirely with apprenticeship would appear to be unwise, partly because it would meet with disapproval in the labour organizations. The traditional skill and intimate knowledge of the local craftsmen and their business experience ought not to be wasted. If they are not suited to give direct instruction to youths, then it is all the more important that the teachers responsible for technical instruction should not only make themselves acquainted with local practices and local resources but direct the pupils' attention to the study of them, thus applying science and wider knowledge to what comes within their practical experience. The best method would be technical instruction provided by the education authorities to precede and supplement periods of apprenticeship in suitable workshops. Therefore co-operation between the education authorities and the trade organizations in the matter of training of juveniles is a matter of great urgency.

The existence of Whitley Councils and Industrial Reconstruction Committees, and even of Trade Boards, should be of the greatest assistance in devising schemes which will correlate school or class instruction with apprenticeship and practice in the workshops, so as to combine the merits of both systems and to economize time spent in learning and money spent in providing instruction.

There is a danger in teaching children crafts while they are young lest their labour should be exploited. This is not an adequate reason for not supplying training in dexterity at an age when they can learn so well, but it is a strong reason for safeguarding them against the shortsightedness of their parents. Special legislation may be necessary to stop exploitation of child labour, for children who sell their wares may evade regulations concerning employment out of school hours. Examples of this danger are seen in the lace industry. A lady who had taken great trouble in improving the position of the lace-makers in her village, opened a lace school, but had to close it because she found the mothers kept their girls at the pillow for the sake of their earnings, when they ought to have been playing. The danger is not so acute where adult wages are good. But it must be remembered that knitting, sewing, and lace-making, the occupations which are most frequently taught to school children, afterwards become the means of sweating. This shows the need, on the one hand, to improve the teaching and to follow it up so that a class of work may be done which can command good value, and, on the other hand, to regulate prices. Women's Institutes can do much educational work on these lines, and the chance of selling through the Institutes ought to prevent selling at sweated rates, though it need not prevent selling advantageously through other channels.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF RURAL INDUSTRIES IN RURAL ECONOMY

THERE is an intimate connexion between rural industries and the agricultural and social life which forms their setting, and their prosperity must depend on the special functions that they fulfil, both in direct relation to agriculture, and in the national economy. And even apart from their economic function, there are social and educational considerations which make it important to study their effect on rural society and on the welfare of the nation as a whole. It is not possible always to distinguish between economic and other social influences ; but the distinction must be clearly borne in mind to avoid confusion between the economic ' laws ' which depend on natural facts practically beyond the control of man, and those conditions which are remotely or otherwise alterable at will. To the first category belong not only such facts as the climate, the distribution of minerals, and the earth's contour, but such characteristics of human nature as the capacity for organization in huge bodies for the purpose of self-preservation. To the second category belong those natural forces, such as the flow of water or the power of heat, which man can harness to his service, and also the laws of the country and the habits of the people, which can be altered by combination and education provided there is sufficient united will power and clearness of vision to effect the change. At present arguments are often based on premises which are ceasing to hold good. For instance, when it is stated that small-holders or independent craftsmen are incapable of reaching the degree of education necessary for co-operation, it is forgotten that their incapability is due partly to alterable causes. The causes which obliged countrymen to leave school at eleven or thirteen and to live a life of hard work with little opportunity for social intercourse unless at the public-house, to follow old-fashioned methods because they understood no others and could afford no risky experiments, have already begun to disappear, though their influence will still be felt

for many years. There is in England to-day no criterion of the capabilities of a rural population provided with social and educational opportunities suited to their needs.

The Relation of Rural Industries to Agriculture

Rural industries may assist agriculture under varying circumstances in the following ways :

Directly

- (1) By utilizing land and material unsuitable for agriculture.
- (2) By utilizing machinery and transport in conjunction with agriculture.
- (3) By providing for agricultural needs.
- (4) By introducing a population which creates a market for farm produce, or, alternatively,
- (5) By utilizing labour not occupied, or only partly occupied, in agriculture.

Indirectly

- (1) By increasing the population of rural areas and hence affording opportunities for larger groupings for organization, education and training, and social and material amenities.
- (2) By introducing into rural life a different element which makes life more interesting and people more intelligent, alert, and progressive.

On the other hand, rural industries may burden agriculture

- (1) By subsidizing low wages and keeping down the standard of life and of work in rural districts.
- (2) By competing with outdoor occupations and absorbing time, energy, and capital which are needed in the home or on the garden or the farm.
- (3) By failure, through inability to adapt themselves to changing industrial and commercial methods.

The Utilization of Land and Material for Industries

There are in many districts certain tracts or small pieces of land which, though unsuitable for agricultural purposes, may yet be a source of profit to the agricultural population. Local quarries may provide the farmer with building material for walls, cottages and farm buildings, and local woods with material for fencing, repairs, and fuel.

In Sussex the sale of underwood for hop-poles provided a valuable addition to the farmer's income, but the decline of the market for these caused what was once a source of profit to become a nuisance to him ; he had the choice of cutting his coppice at a loss, or of allowing it to grow to the detriment of the land which it enclosed. In such cases the establishment of woodland industries would assist the farmer by providing a market for an otherwise unsaleable product. In Berkshire the gullies which grow the best turnery poles are too steep for agriculture. Not only does the gully wood fetch a good price, but it helps to drain the land by absorbing the moisture which finds its way to the gullies from the neighbouring fields. Osiers can be grown with profit on land which is too wet and heavy for tillage or pasture. Hazel will grow on clay, birch and fir on sand, willow and alder on marshy ground where only very poor returns are possible in agriculture. It appears, however, that in cases where the value of the timber or copse wood is negligible, agricultural cultivation might be worth while, provided the initial expenses could be met. On the other hand, the establishment of saw-mills or turneries in the near locality, given transport facilities, would alter the position by increasing the value of the wood.

There are few examples in the area investigated of the use of waste or by-products of agriculture for industries. Straw is used for thatching and by gipsies for bee-hives, but not in this district for hats or for cardboard. In Bedfordshire foreign material has largely superseded the local straw for plaiting. Rushes are again being made up into 'workmen's flag' and other kinds of baskets, by Women's Institutes and land girls, and there appears to be considerable room for development. Rushes have to be cleared from the river-beds in any case, and if properly harvested at the right time, rural industries make them saleable. The rush-matting industry of the Abingdon carpet factory depends on the local rushes ; they are also used for seating chairs, and large quantities used to be sold to coopers for barrels. Another example of the use of material which has otherwise a very small market value is found in the rabbit-skin glove industry which has been promoted through Women's Institutes. Although these two industries have little direct connexion with agriculture, they do create a value for materials which would otherwise be almost useless. As for wool, the cloth and blanket mills

do not now depend on the local supplies in this district, neither do the leather workers and glove makers depend on local skins to any great extent. The carriage of wool and leather is a comparatively small item in the cost of production and it is not clear that a local weaving industry would have much effect on the value of wool to the farmers. Investigation in other counties, where more weaving is done, may throw more light on this question. It is possible that a local cloth-mill or hand-weaving industry might be beneficial to such families as the Bucklebury commoners whose grazing rights enable them to make a living mostly by rearing a few sheep on the common.

Economy in the use of Power and Transport

Examples have been found of the same engine being used at one time for agricultural purposes and at other times for some form of wood work. A steam engine, for example, was used for threshing and for sawing timber, and a small oil engine for grinding corn and for sawing and turning wood for chairs. The increasing use of power and machinery is one of the features of large scale farming. Small farmers would be less at a disadvantage in this respect if machinery, engines, and motors, which they would only require at certain seasons on the farm, could be turned to account for some form of manufacture at other times.¹ The use of portable engines in the woods points to considerable development. There is also the question of power for lighting purposes. In cases where it would not pay to light a village or a farm by electricity, because of the few hours in the day during which the power would be used, the use of surplus power for driving small machinery for an industry might be a practical solution.

Agriculture, especially the production of perishable food-stuffs, depends to a great extent on the facilities for quick transport. Industries are important as giving employment to a larger population than agriculture alone can support, and making it possible to develop facilities for goods and passenger traffic where they could not otherwise pay their way. The same applies to other public services ; in a sparsely populated district the money available from the rates is small in proportion to the expenses of administration.

¹ Investigation and experiment in the use of power would throw light on the problem of electric power stations with regard to rural economy. Further investigation into power is needed.

The Supplying of Agricultural Needs: Village Workshops

An examination of the figures given in the Census of Occupation, 1911, reveals the fact that a very considerable proportion of the rural population is engaged in supplying the wants of agricultural families. Taking together the aggregate of rural districts of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, agriculture accounts for 29,485 males out of a total male population of 94,312 (over 10 years). The numbers engaged in production for external markets other than agriculture were small in proportion to those engaged in meeting local requirements. For example, the number of carpenters and joiners in the rural districts for the two counties was given as 2,229, whereas 'workers in wood and bark', which included turners and other wood machinists and basket-makers, were only 564, and even these were not producing only for an external market. Carpenters are put in the building section; no figures are given to show the number of wheelwrights or wagon builders. Again, in the rural districts of Oxfordshire, where there are glove factories, blanket mills, and a cloth mill, the total number of women employed in producing cloth, blankets, ready-made clothing, and gloves, was slightly less than the number of dressmakers and women tailors. In the rural districts of Oxfordshire and Berkshire domestic service, including laundry, accounted for 17,672 women and 10,357 men. Of saddlers there were 167 in the rural districts out of 308 in the whole administrative counties; of smiths 1,025 out of a total of 1,423 were in the rural districts.¹

It is clear that numerically the people engaged in repairs and making to order for an agricultural population are by far the most important section of those engaged in rural industries. They are also of the most direct importance to agriculture. It is desirable therefore to study in some detail the position of the people who work in village manufacturing and repairing workshops in order to judge how far their service to agriculture is efficient.

Saddlery is carried on to a large extent in the country towns, where a saddler has better facilities for getting material and can make and deal in a variety of leather goods when not engaged in repairs, thus building a good business on side lines. The village saddlers appear to be an unenterprising class. They are isolated from their fellows, find little demand for work other than repairs, and are unorganized and uneducated. There is a trade journal, but few of them

¹ See *Census of England and Wales, 1911*, vol. x, Part II, pp. 32-4, 467-9.

take it in. The scarcity and costliness of leather during and since the war has hit them very hard.

The village wheelwright's work consists mainly of repairs, the manufacture of wheels and other parts being carried on in large quantities at big works. Machinery has taken wagon building to a great extent out of the hands of the local wheelwrights. Wheelwrighting work is also in many instances concentrated in bigger local shops, where the necessary smithing can also be done. In Berkshire, on lines of good railway service, local wheelwrighting has greatly declined. In the remoter parts of Oxfordshire there are still very small shops ; they are at the present time busy and labour is short. The concentration is partly owing to the development of steam saw-mills and the consequent disappearance of local saw-pits. Wheelwrighting is heavy work and hand-sawing has been the hardest part of it ; carpenters therefore tend to go into the building trade where work is lighter and payment better. Builders are organized whereas wheelwrights are not.¹ Wheelwrights can get good terms for repairs, but there is a strong feeling amongst them that a man who can repair is also competent to undertake wagon building. This has been to some extent corroborated from other sources. Local carpenters cannot afford to advertise like the big firms who send their agents to the markets, and they do not win, in their own country, the reputation many of them deserve. It is said that the purchase of carts from big works at Bristol and other western towns is largely a matter of fashion ; that orders for carts are placed with these firms at the last moment, whereas a local man, had he had the order in good time to fit in the work between repairs, could have made a much better cart at no greater expense. Examples are reported of carts from big firms being built of wood unfit for the purpose. A covering of paint does not hide deficiencies from the man who undertakes repairs. The different parts of carts are built of different kinds of wood ; iron is also used in the construction. If certain parts were sent from the big works unpainted, to be put together by local cart-builders, farmers would probably get better articles. More manufacturing work in local shops would have the advantage of attracting a better type of man to the trade. At the present time repairs are in arrears and carpenters are short-handed. The development of the work of small engines in the shops, and the use of portable steam saws in the woods, does something to counteract the competition of the large works, but for

¹ Associations of Master Wheelwrights and Implement Makers do exist,

manufacturing work the shops would have to be organized on a sufficiently large scale for economic use of machinery.

The position of the farriers is somewhat different. The shoeing of horses and the repairing of machinery are matters of urgency, especially at harvest time, and smithies must be within easy reach of the farms ; therefore this work cannot be concentrated. As for the manufacture of implements, the smiths, like the wheelwrights, have been affected by the competition of big works, where patents are brought out and improvements readily made. But oil engines which can work lathes have also assisted the smiths, and here and there is found a mechanic of great ability. Local smiths take up agencies for the big agricultural firms, to whom they must apply for 'parts' which are patented, or which they cannot copy. A difficulty sometimes arises through the firms being unwilling to have more than one agent in a given area, and firms will refuse to supply other smiths direct with a 'part'. This causes unnecessary cost and partly accounts for difficulty in executing repairs. It would be useless to attempt to discuss the position of the country farriers as manufacturers of implements without much more investigation. In any case, smiths, as well as wheelwrights and saddlers, would do better as manufacturers if they were in a good centre or at least on an important highway with railway communication. Therefore the smiths in outlying villages must depend on shoeing and repairs for their chief custom.

In spite of the excellent work of the Master Farriers' Association the present position with regard to shoeing-smiths is serious.¹ Before the war it was difficult for a farrier to get a good journeyman or an apprentice who would stay, and it is very rare in this district for a farmer to employ a smith as is the custom in some districts. The scarcity was attributed to the poor payment, isolation, and lack of openings in villages, to the risk of liability for laming a horse, and to the hard work involved. There are no attractions to induce youths to forgo the better immediate earnings in unskilled occupations, and if they wish to become skilled workers there are better conditions in other branches of metal work. In spite of the great advances in the price of shoeing, the farriers do not live so well now as they did before the war. The bad conditions have kept down the quality of the work, and the type of person attracted to the trade is such that many of the masters and journeymen are not

¹ Because of the scarcity of young entrants to the trade. The use of machinery and tractors has made the village smith a more, and not a less,

worth the rates now asked. ‘ Shoeing is skilled work ; a smith is dealing with live flesh and ought to be educated. But he is not looked upon as a skilled workman and is not paid for his skill.’ It is alleged that millions of pounds’ worth of horse flesh is lost to the country through incompetent shoeing, that a very large number of horses—otherwise perfectly sound—break down in the legs through bad shoeing and through not being shod frequently enough. Country smiths, however, are said to be better workmen than those of the towns. Often the type of lad who enters a smithy is not fit for the work and receives no adequate instruction. After a year or so of odd jobs he will be allowed to pull off a horseshoe and will put his lever against the part where the horn is thinnest, thus causing bleeding and possibly inflicting life-long injury merely through the failure of his master to explain to him even the rudiments of anatomy. Smiths will cut away parts of the hoof and pad which are the natural protection against concussion. This shows the great importance to agriculture of the educational work which is being undertaken by the Farriers’ Association. The qualification of a registered shoeing smith is given under the auspices of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, an old London Livery Company, one of whose members is the President of the Farriers’ Association. There is also a higher qualification, that of Associate of the London Company of Farriers, for smiths who wish to undertake special anatomical shoeing under the direction of veterinary surgeons. The results are most promising. A large number of smiths enter the examinations and attend the competitions at agricultural shows for the sake of instruction. ‘ Give a man education and he at once gains self-respect.’ There is great pride taken in the letters R.S.S. which a registered smith is entitled to put after his name. There is a very strong feeling amongst farriers that no smith ought to be allowed to practise shoeing unless he has the R.S.S. qualification. The examination includes practical work and a certain amount of the theory of anatomy. The Farriers’ Association also does useful work in giving legal assistance in the case of a smith being sued for damages to a horse through alleged negligence. In some instances a man may be ruined through an injury to a horse which he did not inflict, but in others the man is culpable. The subscription to the Farriers’ Association covers insurance against accident to horses occurring in the course of shoeing. In the district investigated, the journeymen farriers are now asking for 1s. 6d. an hour ; in the north of England they are asking

for 2*s.* The farriers cannot put up the price of shoeing sufficiently to attract good men to the trade unless the standard of work is raised. Therefore better facilities for technical instruction are urgently needed. Although the Farriers' Association now has over 10,000 members in the country, there are still a considerable number of unorganized smiths in the Oxford district. This makes the position of the local secretaries of the association difficult. The 'blacklegs' are apt to set their prices just below those fixed by the M.F.A., thus under-cutting them and at the same time reaping the advantage of the organization without having to pay the 3*s.* a month subscription. These funds are badly needed, for organization depends on travelling to meetings, and hard-working farriers cannot afford out-of-pocket expenses. The courage, perseverance, and devotion, which local secretaries of this association and of trade unions generally in rural districts put into the work of organization, speaks of the urgency of their cause. Especially in the initial stages, the work is apt to be thankless and difficult. But the chief difficulty is with the older men; the young ones for the most part realize the necessity of combination.

In view of the difficulties of organization over scattered districts, it would appear that the craftsmen of a neighbourhood should be organized together. Woodworkers, except for builders' carpenters and 'wood machinists', are unorganized. Saddlers, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights deal with the same customers; therefore, as far as selling goes, it appears that some form of combined action might be possible. As repairers only, this would be difficult; it, therefore, seems worth while to consider on these grounds alone, and further to investigate, the chances of more manufacture being carried on in rural workshops.

In repairing shops there are always periods of extra pressure, and consequently, if the staff is sufficient, there are periods of slackness. A man cannot leave a repairing shop unattended in case of an emergency call. It is for this reason advisable that he should not be single-handed. There might be: (1) manufacture of the staple products of these and other workmen, for example, boots, saddles, whips, carts, implements of various kinds; (2) assembling and supplementing parts; (3) manufacture of by-products and development on side-lines. It is often pointed out that the village craftsman can make a variety of articles for household use which demand artistic talent and good workmanship. The scarcity of horseshoes is so great that smiths

have at the present time more than enough to do replenishing their stocks. Wheelwrights are still busy with the pressure of repairs. But the tools are there, scraps of material are there, skill is there, and in many cases an engine also is there. It should be possible, without diverting labour from the important business of the shop, to produce many of the articles needed in the household, from latches to toys, and there is little doubt that organization of the market would bring a sale for good work of this class. The standard demanded in fittings is rising, and the qualities of durability, suitability, and good workmanship are growing in favour. The production of such articles would give lucrative employment to persons not fitted for heavy work or needing intervals of light work. Disabled and old men and youths would benefit by employment. Able-bodied craftsmen, even if they took no direct part in the work, would benefit indirectly by utilization of waste, and in some cases of power and by the interest aroused in the sale of these articles in the local town or elsewhere. The industry would benefit by youths being brought into the shop and trained in the use of tools while still too young for heavy work. Economies could be effected by a certain increase in the size of the shops, especially in fairly good centres. The organization which would be desirable for co-operative selling would give opportunities for the craftsmen to meet together for standardizing prices, not only of those by-products, but of their staple work. Although the economic importance of subsidiary workshop crafts might not be very great, yet it is from small workshops that larger industries have sprung; and the manufacturing and repairing craftsmen have, in their function with regard to agriculture, perhaps a stronger claim for assistance than any others engaged in the rural industry.

The position of the dressmakers is somewhat similar to that of these craftsmen, and their work also could be assisted and developed by the stimulation of production of certain classes of clothing. They too urgently need organization. The matter is further discussed in the conclusion to reports on the clothing industries.

The danger is that men and women may be tempted to evade trade union and State regulation by setting up for themselves without adequate equipment of capital and skill, and may do harm to themselves and to their neighbours. There are, for instance, two to six dressmakers in most villages. If they are capable of the very important work of

clothing the village economically, relieving the mothers who are too busy to do all the family needlework and of saving the expense of going to a distance for fitting, they are most certainly worthy of their hire. But they may be working for themselves because another dressmaker cannot afford to employ them at Trade Board rates, either on account of her prices being too low or because they are incompetent. Village dressmakers are apt to be overworked because their charges are low ; they will work far too long hours rather than lose custom by refusing orders.

Employment of Spare Labour

The need for providing occupation for spare labour arises from two facts : first, that agriculture is essentially a seasonal industry, needing more labour during the various harvests, and secondly, that there are attached to agricultural families a certain number of people who need openings other than working on the land.

The classes of the rural population who require rural industries are :

- (1) *Men and women who are employed seasonally or part-time on the land or in their homes, and need a second means of earning.*
 - (a) Small-holders whose holdings are not big enough to occupy them or support them all the year round.
 - (b) Casual or seasonal agricultural workers, such as woodmen, who work on the farms in summer.
 - (c) Women who help on the family holding, or are employed occasionally on a farm.
- (2) *Those who live in the country and are unsuited to agricultural work.*
 - (a) Young people receiving part-time education who are not within easy reach of a town.
 - (b) Unmarried women related to agricultural workers.
 - (c) Others with ties to a village, who prefer indoor occupation and have aptitude for, or are accustomed to, a particular craft.
 - (d) Men and women who are by age or disability past outdoor work and yet are capable of earning and need to do so.
- (3) *People of any age or class who like to make a hobby of some manual occupation.*

Part-time and Seasonal Workers

Farmers need more labour at certain seasons than at others. Before the adoption of harvesting machinery there was much more seasonal work on the farms for the labourers' families than there is now. On small holdings where little machinery is used, the need for extra work at busy seasons is more urgent than on large farms. Small farmers who do not own harvesting machinery are sometimes in danger of losing their crops owing to the delay. They cannot have the use of the machines until the bigger crops are harvested. Farmers can procure extra labour either by employing their workers overtime, or by employing a greater number of regular workers, than the farm will occupy all the year round, or by employing extra labour which may be found in the locality or introduced from elsewhere, such as the hoppers and fruit-pickers who pour into Kent and Worcestershire, or the Irishmen who come for the hay, corn, and potato harvests to Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire. If local labour is employed to any great extent, some occupation is needed at other times which can be carried on so as not to clash with the busiest times on the land. Small-holdings which yield the same products as the larger farms will require extra attention at the same time,¹ therefore small-holding cultivation cannot conveniently be combined with piecework agriculture by the same men.

The following examples show the way in which extra seasonal labour is found in the area investigated. Seasonal work is done in the Kennet district by men who are in the woods in the winter and on the farm in summer. They usually have a little land, and in many cases common rights as well. Many of them are squatters who own their cottages and have some kind of shed or workshop where they make up the wood into small articles. Where the farm workers have no land and no workshops, woodwork cannot thus be combined with seasonal farm work.

Women and girls employed in glove-making are let off for turnip-hoeing, haymaking, fruit picking, or potato lifting, as the case may be, in districts where there are small-holdings. With the exception of the gloving industry no cases have been found of women or girls being employed

¹ Probably the reason why farm fruit-gardens and orchards are so badly neglected that the fruit does not always pay for the picking, is that the fruit harvest is liable to clash with the hay and corn harvest. Thus the crop is sometimes bought on the trees by dealers who make themselves responsible for protecting, picking, and taking to market.

seasonally or for part-time as a regular system in mills. Home work, however, is sometimes taken at odd times when other work is slack.

Basket-making, hurdle-making, and other woodwork is sometimes done as a seasonal or part-time occupation, combined with some form of work on the land, but the second occupation of a craftsman is often keeping a public-house.

Gardens and allotments provide the commonest form of seasonal work for agricultural labourers.

People living in the Country who are not engaged in Agricultural Work

Agricultural prosperity depends not only on the conditions of the people actually engaged in the work, but on the condition of the whole population. Therefore it is advisable to consider in this section people who are not agricultural workers, though their homes are in the country. There are, in addition to the craftsmen of the manufacturing and repairing workshops, who have already been considered, boys and girls receiving part-time education, unmarried women and others who are related to agricultural families, and disabled, delicate or old people unfit for agricultural work.

With the application of the new Education Act seasonal or part-time work will be a necessity for young people of both sexes. Some of them will be employed on the land in summer, and their education will probably be fitted in to the seasons when agricultural work is slack. There will still be time for other occupations, and the question of earnings as well as training will be urgent.

One of the causes of migration from remote country districts is the lack of openings for unmarried women and other members of agricultural families who do not wish to work on the land. Where there are no industries, domestic service, as the only resident occupation, is the sole opening for girls. There are villages where almost all the girls, and many of the lads, desert the village soon after they leave school. The census gives the number of female domestic servants in the rural districts of Oxfordshire and Berkshire as 14,915. Though parents are often glad enough to let their daughters go if they have a connexion with good houses where they will be well taught, they do not always wish to spare them; yet it may be impossible to keep them at home with no means of earning. Domestic service, like other occupations, for which training has been inadequate, will be more likely to attract a good type of worker if girls

are trained to be skilled workers and regarded as such. In any case, few households are suitable for taking girls as young as fourteen ; the house is apt to be understaffed and the work too hard, and often neither employers nor the other servants have the time or capacity to teach the girls properly. Therefore domestic service cannot be considered satisfactory as the only opening for very young country girls.¹

Other openings for women in the area investigated, apart from land work and domestic service, are dressmaking and work in mills, shops, or small factories in the comparatively few cases where they are within reach. Gloving employs the largest number of any organized industry. Women and girls are also employed in chair-caning and rushing, box and toy-making, and bench sawing in sawmills where light goods are made. But the openings are inadequate, and more work will be needed for young people attending continuation schools. In most industries there appears to be a tendency to concentration in the market towns or in villages where there is a railway. Therefore development entails motor transport facilities, either for passengers or for goods between these centres and the more remote villages. This will also be necessary for education.

Letting lodgings is another means by which country women augment the family earnings. By taking visitors in the summer, a family is enabled to pay the rent of a more expensive house, thus having more comfortable quarters in the winter when more time must be spent indoors. But the shortage and the bad condition of houses makes this impossible in many villages where otherwise town people would be glad to come. Summer visitors make a market for eggs, fruit, and vegetables, besides being a source of income to a family where there is some one with time for the work.

Another class whose opportunities for work may affect agriculture consists of men or women suffering from physical

¹ Considering the housing difficulty which becomes specially acute where some industry is being rapidly developed, a solution might be found by opening hostels with a competent staff of domestic workers assisted by a number of young trainees or probationers. With a first-rate teaching and organizing staff, an excellent all-round training in housewifery, including needlework, fruit preserving, and other alternative courses to suit various tastes could be given which would lead to good positions, not only in private houses, but in hotels, schools, dressmaking and other establishments. Obviously the work of private households will have to be regulated or organized if it is to attract skilled workers who are worth high wages, and in view of the universal need for cooking and cleaning, the sooner the status of domestic work is raised by recognized and efficient training the better.

or mental disability, which makes them unfit for the battles of the labour market. The war has made this problem extremely acute for the present generation, and in view of schemes for settling ex-service men on the land, it is well to consider briefly the relation of their work to agriculture. They must, for their own and the community's sake, be put in the way of independence, so far as it is possible to do so; otherwise they may, through their misfortune, drag down the standard of the trade in which they are engaged. Probably the reason why certain sedentary occupations, such as saddlery, tailoring, and basket-making, have been despised as somewhat lowering in the social scale, is that they are to some extent recruited by the 'unfit', who are sometimes unable to earn a sufficient wage. But these and similar occupations, such as dressmaking, as well as other crafts which are suitable for delicate or disabled persons, render very substantial services to the agricultural workers and their families, if the work is efficient. Not only on humanitarian grounds, but in the interest of economy, it is a matter of urgency that all disabled persons should receive special consideration with regard to making them efficient. They need training, and in many cases 'after care', such as St. Dunstan's gives to the blind. They also may need pensions in proportion to their disability, and special medical attention. It would be far better to incur the expense of organizing suitable work for subnormal people, and to supplement their earnings where necessary, than to allow them to undercut their more fortunate neighbours or to drift to the workhouse. It has been suggested, with regard to needlework and other occupations for women, that various philanthropic bodies could be enlisted in this cause.¹ There ought to be in every district a permanent work pensions committee to whom persons dealing with cases of disability could apply for advice and assistance. The principle which is now being recognized in the case of the blind applies to other subnormal workers as well. Far from pauperizing them, assistance ought to give them every chance of self-support.

People who desire some Manual Occupation as a Hobby

There is a section of the agricultural population who would profit by better training and better organization for rural industries, though they are not actually in direct need of the earnings which might accrue. Though industries carried on by these people would not be of great economic import-

¹ See pp. 154-60, *post*.

ance, yet a variety of occupations which relieve dullness are helpful in combating depopulation. There are married women and others who have talent and a certain amount of leisure which need an outlet. Not every one who lives in the country can be equally interested in the farmyard or garden. Hobbies are perhaps more needed in the country than in the town. And the natural desire for pocket-money, which is felt by women who are not paid definite sums for their work, can be met through the earnings of a part-time industry. For instance, a number of women who received separation allowances during the war took home work to pass the time and to earn money for sending parcels to the front. But it is of great importance that pocket-money wages should not undercut earnings which are needed for livelihood. It is important too that leisure and talent should not be frittered away on poor or unnecessary work when they might be turned to better account. Therefore the standard of pay and the standard of work done by leisured people for sale should be kept at least to the level of work done for a living. Otherwise money and time spent in providing material and organizing sales for poor work may be wasted. It appears from answers to an inquiry sent to a number of Women's Institutes that the industries are wanted rather for the interest they arouse in home-craft than for the actual earnings, though there are sufficient cases to indicate a very real need of earnings here and there. The reluctance which is found amongst members of Women's Institutes and amongst disabled soldiers to part with their best specimens of work shows the educational value of the crafts as hobbies. To teach discrimination and to raise the standard of taste in the homes is to render a great service to industry, for a great deal of the wasteful and dishonest production often associated with cheap factory production is due to the want of education in the public which does not discriminate between bad work and good. The actual practice of a craft is the best way of developing taste and judgement in buying. Institutes and arts and crafts societies, by encouraging good workmanship and suitable design, can do much to raise the standard of demand.

It will be well to consider carefully the harm which might come from developing industries unwisely, and to realize how much depends on the circumstances of a particular neighbourhood, and, therefore, how important it is to get the people who have intimate knowledge of their own neighbourhood to think out their own policy.

The Subsidizing of Agricultural Wages

First, rural industries may subsidize agricultural wages. There does not seem to be much direct danger of their doing this by providing employment for the relations of well-to-do workers. The real danger lies in the possibility of sweating in cases of real want. One has only to remember the insecurity of many families whose chief wage-earner may be cut off from work through sudden misfortune, whether by his own fault or not, to realize how vivid the fear of the wolf at the door may become, and what a temptation there is to accept work at sweated rates. There is no doubt that past conditions in the gloving industry were intimately connected with the conditions of distress. In fact, the employment of women in home industries not connected with agriculture is usually connected with a time of stress and poverty, and implies that the man's wages have been insufficient. The argument that home industries ought to be promoted to eke out low agricultural wages is not sound for agriculture, as skilled work is incompatible with a low standard in the home. The evils are cumulative, and poor wages, poor work, and poor homes form a vicious circle from which it may take generations to escape. There are cases in which paid employment for married women is necessary and desirable on other grounds, but not for the purpose of subsidizing agricultural wages. Perhaps there is no section of the population which suffers more patiently and more unselfishly from constant overwork than the mothers of growing families. They sacrifice leisure, comfort, and even food, to husband and children. Consequently, there are many, even in families not considered needy, who do not know what it is to feel well. To add to the mother's burden by creating a system which gives her more work in these strenuous years would be to do a great disservice to this and the following generations. Fortunately, the whole weight of the agricultural trade unions would be put in the scale against such a system.

Encroachment upon necessary Hours of Leisure

Industry may quite possibly be arranged so as to alternate with agriculture; but whether the work be done on a holding or on another man's farm, it ought to be possible for the family to live on the earnings of a reasonable working day. The length of this day will vary with different persons, and it is often found that men will work far longer hours on their

own account and at their own will than for others. In fact, one reason for the desire often found amongst craftsmen to set up for themselves, either in their own craft or on a holding, is because they do not want regulated hours of work. In the case of the small-holders and village craftsmen these long hours may be detrimental in spite of the doctrine of those lovers of handicraft who are fortunate enough to have leisure and means to follow their own natural bent. It is true that work done in the garden or workshop may be a delight to the worker, but the element of delight is apt to be evanescent when the necessaries of life are in the balance, or even when the little extras which make life pleasant depend upon the greatest possible output. Parents need leisure for the enjoyment of social and family life, and children need the leisure of their elders. In the best interests of home and village life, work for a living ought not to encroach upon the hours of recreation. Much of the difficulty in organizing village clubs and institutes arises from the fact that people are too busy. Every movement which tends to promote healthy recreation and social interest in the country is valuable ; clubs, flower shows, institutes, games, dancing, art, and the handcrafts appear in the programme of many of the organizations which set out to reform the villages. The opportunities of good work for all the bodies which promote recreation and education are enormously increased by the work of those other organizations which are fighting for the principle of a living wage. The standard of life may be in greater danger when the after-war boom of trade is over.

* *Danger of possible Failure of Rural Industries*

There are other ways in which rural industries might be harmful to a neighbourhood. They might create depression by failure. There is always a danger of competition by more highly organized production of a large factory. Slight improvements in machinery are constantly being made and small firms cannot always afford to adopt them. Again, in the crafts, good production will have the effect of raising the standard of machine production, thus provoking competition in quality. Although cases of actual distress through failure or decline of rural industries are not common now, yet there is evidence of considerable hardship where an industry has been superseded by the use of machinery or where the demand has ceased. This danger would be present if small-holdings were established depending on

crafts or industries to occupy the holders and their families in winter, unless they were able to move with the times. Rural industries have been applied to districts where the agricultural yield was small in proportion to the population it supported. In Scotland, schemes have been carried out from time to time to help the distressed families of crofters ; in Ireland, to provide occupation in congested districts ; in Germany, in poor and mountainous regions where agriculture alone does not yield a sufficient income to support the population in comfort. At the present time, trade is so uncertain and speculative that ambitious schemes for starting rural industries would be risky. It is undesirable from every point of view to produce for a luxury market, though a quality market is usually essential for rural industries. Articles of good quality which would not in a time of plenty and security be considered luxuries may be so in times of national poverty. There is nothing more pathetic than the type of begging which is covered by the attempt to sell what is not really wanted, and to encourage this type of work is not charity. It would be a great mistake to divert capital, brains, and labour into unproductive channels which might otherwise find their way into productive ones. In the case of long periods of training this would be disastrous. Therefore it is important that ' vocational training ' should in the first place be really educational, developing the qualities of resourcefulness, application, and reliability as well as the utmost physical health, rather than turning out skilled manual specialists.

The Place of Rural Industries in the National Economy

There is another aspect of the relation of rural industries to agriculture which is concerned with questions of agricultural policy. Their first claim for a place in the national economy will rest on their use in promoting the rural industry of first importance, namely the production of food and of raw materials for other industries from the land. It would be beyond the scope of this report to discuss the question whether English farming as a whole, or in the particular districts investigated, should aim mainly at producing those perishable necessities which deteriorate with long carriage, and therefore cannot well be imported. But it is alleged that many families are not getting enough milk, and the supply of clean, fresh milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables at prices which are not prohibitive is of great import-

ance to national health. This depends on the utmost economy in production and transport. Not only must the dairy, poultry, and fruit farmers be able to send their daily supplies cheaply and speedily to the districts where these articles are not produced in sufficient quantity; but if they are to put cheap regular supplies on the market, they must be able to deal profitably with the seasonal surplus. Therefore cheese, milk-drying and jam factories, fruit pulping and bottling stations are necessary. The question then arises whether the plant and labour required for these could not be utilized at other times in the year for rural industries. And, whether the factories are established locally or in larger centres, whether raw materials or finished products have to be moved, efficient transport is essential. A development which would make it worth while to run the necessary lorries and trains for goods traffic, and to transport labour where needed would be of special assistance to the type of cultivation which produces fresh goods for a daily market. And the problem of rural industries or, rather, of the development of industry in rural areas, is of greater importance in connexion with dairy farming and market-gardening than with arable farming. The type of organization set up both in Ireland and England by the respective agricultural organization societies for marketing farm products has so much in common with what appears to be needed for many rural industries, that considerable economies might be effected by co-ordinating the organization necessary for both. This applies not only to small local schemes for lorries and dépôts, but to the development of traffic and other commercial facilities on a larger scale.

Another claim for rural industries to a place in the national economy rests on the belief that they tend to encourage qualities, both in the products and in the workers, which are of value to the nation. It has already been suggested that the presence in rural society of people with other interests than those connected with agriculture is beneficial to rural neighbourhoods; it remains to consider the direct services which rural manufacturers and craftsmen can render to the public, and the value of rural industries as giving scope to personal characteristics which it is in the national interest to develop.

The services to agriculture have already been discussed. As for services to the public at large, it is evident that the comparative freedom of a small workshop, the fact that the work is less subdivided and more directly under the control

of the master, originator or designer, and the environment of the countryside do tend to give to work and products a distinctive character which is of great value. And since adaptability is an essential requirement in rural producers, it will be a gain to national industry if a certain proportion of industrial production is carried on successfully in rural workshops, especially in goods which are made for personal and individual requirements. In many instances the good quality of country work and country workers was pointed out, and although instances of poor rural work are quite as striking, yet the fact that certain rural industries owe their survival partly to the quality of the work, shows that they meet a real need. The distinctive qualities due to conditions of manufacture may, however, even with the best possible commercial organization, be too costly for a public which must buy cheaply. Therefore the sphere of rural industries is likely to be narrow.

But some industries owe their survival in rural neighbourhoods to a cheap supply of labour. The danger of subsidizing agricultural wages, and lowering the standards of rural work and life has already been pointed out. Any possible gain to the public in obtaining certain products at low prices is counterbalanced by these evils, and it is not in the national interest that English rural workers should compete in the world market of cheap labour. It is far better that cheap products should be imported if they cannot be turned out economically at home under good conditions.

As for personal qualities of country craftsmen, it is difficult to judge how far these are due to their actual calling and how far to the fact that their industry gives them opportunities, which the agricultural labourers lack, of coming into contact in the course of business with a variety of people. The independent craftsman has greater responsibility and more scope for initiative than the wage-earner. And his work tends to develop these qualities of imagination and foresight by which he first conceives what he must make and then carries out his conception in concrete form. It is this, even more than exercise in manual dexterity, which gives to craftsmanship its great educational value, and it is for this reason that experience of the work and organization of a small manufacturing business should play an important part in the equipment of craftsmen and mechanics. The absence of rural workshops would diminish the opportunities for such training. In spite of the evident need for better education, the country craftsmen and

practical working manufacturers interviewed in the course of inquiry have in a great many instances given the impression, not only of keen intelligence, wide interest and valuable knowledge in matters relating to their own trade, but of genuine concern for its prosperity and for the welfare of all those who are engaged in it, combined in some cases with remarkable public spirit. This seems to show that industries and crafts do call forth some of the characteristics which it is hoped may be developed by education. The inquiry met with universal interest and willingness to help with information, and the practical suggestions given by rural managers and craftsmen, as well as their lucid statements of economic theories which the student finds in difficult language in text-books, showed that much thought is being given to possibilities of development.

Another reason in favour of developing rural industries, provided the conditions are healthy, is the overcrowding in and near the towns. If, by means of rural industries, a greater number of those people who wish to live in the country and are yet unsuited to agricultural life, could earn a living in the environment which suits them, if more children could be brought up in the country and more families live away from what will probably be for several generations at least crowded, dingy, and sordid city surroundings, there is no doubt that national health and happiness would be increased. But the conditions will not necessarily be healthy because they are rural, and every argument which can be brought forward in favour of rural industries depends primarily upon the possibility of efficient organization, both of production and of commerce, so that their development may be economically sound.

Rural Industries in relation to Social Problems

Agricultural prosperity does not depend only on economic considerations. In fact, the study of rural industries in relation to agriculture leads one to think that, although they depend for their existence on economic factors, their chief importance is rather social and educational than strictly economic. Therefore it will be well to conclude this section with a brief consideration of their social value for the rural community.

It is as undesirable that the rural population should be composed entirely of farmers and farm labourers, or that the affairs of the villages should be governed entirely according to the farmers' interests as that the towns should be

entirely commercial or residential and governed by the interests of the tradespeople. Local government in town and country is deplorably bad. One cause is probably the predominance in each case of one particular set of interests in the governing bodies. We find in the country the following results. Education is deplorably backward ; the young people are apt to be looked upon as prospective plough-boys or maid-servants, and are not even made proficient for that ; roads and transport are neglected, rates are regarded as a burden rather than as an investment ; and the means of developing the neighbourhood for greater all-round prosperity are neglected. The second cause is the fact that county boundaries do not represent an economic area with any kind of centre for the whole. This has an important bearing on the problem, for no satisfactory economic development can take place without reference to geographical facts.

The tendency for social and educational interests to centre in a town which can be reached by bicycle, motor-bus, or train, without much expense, is a growing one, and will increase with the administration of the Education Act of 1918. This fact ought to be borne in mind, and the economic possibilities of the market town in relation to the surrounding villages will give the solution to the problem of rural industries. Whether industries are actually carried on in this town or in the villages themselves, it will be the convenient centre for administration. The great difficulties are transport, housing, capitalization, and lack of market facilities. Unless education is to be a farce, good schools must be established in centres within reach of the villages, at any rate for the older children. Boys and girls receiving part-time general education will also need :

1. Either the means of earning something towards maintenance, or maintenance grants, which would be heavy on the rates.

2. Technical instruction to fit them for their vocations as adults. Even if industries are not entirely self-supporting, so far as the juvenile employees are concerned, it will be necessary to establish industries in which juveniles can earn and learn.

At present a boy or girl going to the neighbouring town¹ to learn finds little to interest him or her in rural subjects,

¹ Unfortunately this is also true of many village schools. A 'rural bias' in the curriculum does not make amends if the teacher lacks interest in rural life.

and attention becomes focussed, not on the local surroundings, but on some town where there is 'life'. But it is the people who make the life, and one way in which we can make our market towns alive with interest is to develop them, so far as they are capable of being developed, as economic centres of the locality. This can be done (1) by establishing where possible such industries as will supply local needs or utilize local material, and (2) by developing the market by co-operative effort in collecting local produce of all kinds and in procuring goods and materials of better value. Commerce needs to be raised to a higher level in intelligence and integrity.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

THE following brief summary will show, as far as can be seen from the district investigated, the economic prospects of rural industries, the grounds upon which the claims for assisting rural industries are based, the dangers to be guarded against, and the principal needs to be met. The case for social action will next be dealt with, and in conclusion certain suggestions will be made as to the form of organization which appears to be necessary for development. It is possible that inquiry in other localities by other investigators may lead to different conclusions ; but in any case the best method of organization can only be found by practical experiment, and an experiment started without undue delay, on the lines suggested below, would probably be valuable as a help towards discovering the best method of organization for more comprehensive schemes.

Prospects of Rural Industries

With regard to the decay or growth of rural industries, it cannot generally be said that this or that industry has declined or expanded and is therefore unsuitable or suitable to rural conditions. Instances both of success and failure are found in most industries and often in the same district. Success or failure depends largely on the way in which the separate businesses are organized and the quality of their products. But the decline or expansion of rural industries can in a great many cases be traced to the following general causes. They have in many cases declined because they have had to meet, even in their own market, competition with large-scale production in many parts of the world. Long-distance transport has been developed and is cheap owing to the large scale on which it is organized, whereas local transport is inadequate, badly organized, wasteful, and costly. Rural industries have also been at a disadvantage through the lack of facilities for obtaining the information, education, and training necessary for a type of production which must, to hold its own on the market, be adaptable and able to produce articles of good quality.

And where the workers have had the necessary characteristics they have too often been at the mercy either of employers or of dealers who took advantage of their ignorance of markets and market values, and of their urgent need, to keep down the prices. Depression re-acts upon quality, and thus the distinctive character which makes the rural product marketable is lost.

On the other hand, rural industries have survived in cases where some special facilities exist with regard to proximity of material or market, or to a convenient supply of labour, which enable them to meet the competition of large-scale production. Or their survival is due to some special quality in the product by which it meets a special demand. In the case of repairs, the cause of survival is the necessity of having the work done on the spot ; in the case of manufacture it is often the reputation which the individual firm or craftsman has built up. Where facilities for economy in production and transport are combined with the capacity for turning out goods of distinctive quality for a special market, the best results may be expected. But rural industries are limited, on the one hand, by the demand for the particular class of product which is very largely a local demand, and, on the other, by the amount of material and labour available. Not only is the demand limited, but it is apt to be unstable, and one of the greatest difficulties with regard to rural industries is to render them adaptable to the changing needs of the market. Although a steady rather than a temporarily good market should be aimed at, yet the quality of adaptability, both in plant and personnel, is essential. The use of rural labour and plant in various forms of war production shows that the quality of adaptability is not entirely absent. At the present time of uncertainty with regard to trade prospects, methods of production, and development of transport and power, any rigid organization for rural industries would be more than usually unwise.

Claims for Rural Industries

The value of rural industries to the nation turns upon the relation of small-scale to large-scale production. There exists amongst a certain type of worker a predilection for small-scale production in a rural environment, where there is more scope than in great industrial centres for unregulated effort and personal initiative. In the domain of art, which may extend more or less over all objects in which personal

taste is of account, the element of environment is specially important. But the function of the artist as inspiring large-scale production is probably of greater importance in industry to-day than his function as actually working out, or supervising the working out of, designs. This is a fact of the present time which must be accepted, whatever the future may bring forth. Copyright does not give much protection to design. The sphere of the artist-craftsman must at present be a small one, and his work must be directed to the comparatively small class of people who can and will afford to pay for his taste and originality. If large-scale producers adopt his ideas, so much the better for the general public, who must of necessity content themselves mainly with copies turned out cheaply in larger quantities. The same principle applies to other work than 'craftsmanship'. Small-scale industries can and do fulfil special functions in the national economy, in providing articles which are not needed in vast quantities, and in giving scope for people who wish to make new departures on independent lines.

The economic value of rural industries in relation to agriculture depends on their supplying cheaply and efficiently some of the needs of the agricultural population, or on their making a profitable use of local resources in land, material, or time not required for agriculture, or on their making it possible to organize transport or other public services which would be impracticable in a district where there were no industries other than agriculture. It is important that local repairing should be efficient, and more rural manufacture would probably raise the standard of work in the rural workshops. But apart from repairs, it matters little to the agricultural population as purchasers, whether they are supplied by local manufacturers or not, so long as they can get what they want and get it cheaply. Where local resources are available, it is desirable that industries should be developed. And even where there are no special opportunities, it is desirable, in view of the extreme importance of good transport facilities, especially for dairy farmers and fruit and market gardeners, to consider the possibilities of any industrial development which might make the provision of motor or railway transport profitable. Better transport is necessary not only for directly economic purposes, but also to facilitate education and to give more opportunities for social life. Better education is itself one of the first needs of agriculture, and the problem of conveying young people to places where they can be effectively

trained will have to be solved with reference to economic development. Equally important is the provision of occupation for the boys and girls who are receiving part-time education, and their future efficiency will depend very largely on the way in which they are employed during the years of adolescence. It is necessary in most cases that this employment should be lucrative, but it is still more important that it should be conducive to healthy physical, mental, and moral growth.

It is clear therefore that rural industries do not present an isolated problem which concerns the occupation of a few people scattered over the countryside. The problem is a part of the great problems of national education and progress, and the claim for special consideration of rural industries rests on the fact that they are a vital part of rural and national life. But none of these claims are valid unless it is found that rural industries can be carried on under healthy conditions. As with British industry in general, so with rural industries, the crux of the problem is the raising of standards all round. Organized labour has learned that its fortunes are bound up with those of the lower grade of workers, and is demanding higher wages throughout its ranks. The corollary of this demand is a raising of the standard of production in all grades, for industry can only afford to pay high wages for work of high value.

Economic Dangers in Rural Industries

Is it possible to develop rural industries without perpetuating the evils with which they have so often been connected? Are they compatible with good agricultural conditions, or can they only exist in an underpaid community? It must be remembered that in almost every rural industry conditions have been deplorable, and that in many cases the low economic position of the agricultural labourers and their families were the chief reason for their survival, the extra shillings or pence which they afforded being preferred to poor relief and dependence on charity. The survival in these cases certainly had its good side where it kept alive family pride by avoiding pauperism. But no one would wish men or women to toil all the week at the lathe and then walk six or seven miles to market with a bundle of chair-legs on their backs, only, if luck were bad, to return with them unsold. Nor would they wish little girls of five years old to be taken to market to sell their first

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piece of lace with the promise of a whipping if it were not good enough. Yet these are experiences actually recorded by the old people. Although there is now more respect for childhood and for workers generally, the fact that an industry is carried on under healthy conditions in one district does not prove that abuses do not exist elsewhere. Rural industries may still be a refuge for inefficiency and a source of danger to rural standards of work and life. They may escape the regulations which secure the necessary standards, or, on the other hand, the force of regulation may drive them from the countryside altogether. As rural industries have, within certain limits, a value on economic, and still more on social grounds, it is important to guard against the special dangers to which they are liable. This can only be done (1) **by bringing** rural workers within some form of organization which shall safeguard their earnings without imposing restrictions which are inapplicable to rural conditions, and (2) by the utmost efficiency in production and economy in commerce, so that the industries may be able to provide an adequate return to the workers.

Organization of Workers

The study of the organization of the workers leads to the conclusion that it does tend to industrial efficiency. First, because low standards of work are, generally speaking, the inevitable result of low standards of pay. Secondly, because organization amongst employees leads to organization amongst employers, and this is necessary for commercial economy. Thirdly, because organization gives great educational opportunities. It is not easy, however, to see how far trade unionism in its normal form is applicable to rural industries. It does not meet the whole case, because the workers engaged in rural industries are not all employees, the relation of employer to employed is ~~very~~ different from that in a large factory, and rural industries are usually of a type that cannot easily be regulated without some loss of the freedom which should be their special strength. Where it does apply, special difficulties arise, partly because rural workers in any one industry or craft are scattered in small numbers, and partly because trade-union pressure comes largely from the towns and may not be in accordance with rural interests. In the matter of wages, for instance, an industry might be killed by such a sudden increase as allowed little or no time for the adjustment of the type of production or for the improvement of organization. And

in the matter of hours, especially in repairing shops, too stringent regulation with regard to overtime would be a serious obstacle to employing trade-union labour. There is much to be said for the dislike of the small master of official interference from a distance, and the tendency for a family to dispense with journeymen, by using labour-saving machinery, is the result of trade-union regulation.¹ This is not, however, a reason why trade unionism should be discouraged in rural industries. On the contrary, it is to be advocated wherever it is applicable as the most effective method of raising standards of work and life. But it does indicate that the claims of rural workers and rural firms should be considered on their merits, and not merely in the light of urban conditions. Rural problems and difficulties need to be emphasized, and, for this, organization in rural areas must be strong and comprehensive. The growth of the agricultural unions will help, and the fact that female employees are to some extent organized in the general labour unions ought to be favourable to breadth of policy. And, fortunately, the type of organization which has evolved for Industrial Councils, and for the Interim Reconstruction Committees which it is hoped will eventually be Industrial Councils, does, by its system of district representation, give an opportunity for the proper consideration of local problems. Whether advantage will be taken of it will depend on the strength of the local organizations and the wisdom of their representatives. These councils and committees meet periodically for the discussion of any points which may be brought forward concerning any aspects of the trade in question, and not merely when there is some special grievance to adjust. These established means of conference amongst representatives of employers and employed give scope for the ventilation and discussion which is so necessary. Excellent machinery is in existence ; it rests with employers and employed to make use of it, and to modify and develop it to suit their needs. Further, the channel which this machinery provides between individual industries and the government gives a chance for national policy with regard to training, transport, and other problems, to be developed in the light of local requirements. But the best machinery

¹ There seems to be no reason why regulations should be so stringent as to do away with goodwill and the opportunity to oblige a neighbour in an emergency. Rural work, depending so directly on the weather, and consisting so largely of personal attention to live things, ought not to suffer the tyranny of the clock.

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depends for its usefulness upon the education, imagination, judgement, and will-power of the people it is intended to serve. Otherwise it may be useless, obstructive, or tyrannical.

In sweated industries, where trade-union organization is backward or not yet practicable, Trade Boards are being established to fix minimum rates of payment. Their rulings, unlike those of an industrial council, can be enforced by law. They are therefore to be preferred in trades in which only a small proportion of the firms or of the employers are members of their respective organizations. The existence of a Trade Board encourages organization, and does give opportunities for discussion between employers and employed.

The position with regard to organization of rural wage-earners is hopeful, but organization in rural districts needs to be extended and strengthened if it is not to be swamped by urban elements.

But rural industries afford employment to a large number of persons who do not come under the heading of wage-earners or of employers. These are the independent small craftsmen, such as hurdle-makers and other wood-workers, and home workers who sell lace, knitted goods, or other articles. The regulation of conditions of employment appears to be increasing the number of these independent workers, and there are grounds for fear amongst trade unionists that this type of worker may still undercut prices, and thus lower rates of wages. There is a grave danger that minimum rates may be evaded, and considerable numbers of home workers continue to be overworked and underpaid by firms or dealers who will buy their goods without technically employing them. Where lace-makers or knitters, for example, have no link with the outer world except dealers who sell them their material and buy their product, there is special danger of sweating. Any effort, therefore, which is made to develop the work of independent craftsmen and craftswomen without ensuring standard rates of pay, is bound to arouse the strong opposition of organized labour, and to do this would be to court disaster. If, however, the support of the trade unions can be enlisted for development of rural industries in such a way that standards are safeguarded without undue restrictions being placed on individual effort, the movement might react very favourably on industry as a whole, by giving scope to persons whose best work requires the greatest freedom from regulation.

The best means of setting a standard is to educate public

opinion, which is still far too indifferent to bad conditions. Women's Institutes and other organizations which promote industries should insist on fair prices wherever the sale of work is encouraged. They should also do everything in their power to raise the standard of work so that it may command good prices. It will be advisable to base prices on the trade-union rates obtaining in the district for work of a similar character, special arrangements being made for sub-normal workers.

The principle of working at lower rates during leisure hours is thoroughly unsound, since it tends to debase standards, and the criterion of an industry should be whether it will pay if fair wages are given for good work. The case of the sub-normal worker can be met by enlisting the support of the various philanthropic bodies already engaged in promoting industries for invalids, or by pensions; there is no reason why they should not be assisted to earn what they can without prejudicing the position of other workers by lowering the standard of payment. In the case of lace-makers, knitters, and certain other workers not using local material, it might be best for them to become employees of a society or a firm which would supply them with material and take all commercial responsibility. Even if it did not cover a large proportion of the workers in an industry, an association would be extremely useful in setting a standard with which dealers and employers would have to comply in order to secure workers. It would also be useful as a means of associating in one body people engaged in different crafts. The rural craftsmen deal for the most part with the same set of customers. If they were associated together in some co-operative enterprise for putting their manufacture on the market, their position and the standard of their work might be considerably improved. Marketing schemes could be devised which would give an opening for a variety of producers, and all classes of rural producers could be assisted. Such an enterprise would be of great educational value. If trade unionism were supplemented by co-operative associations amongst all the craftsmen and small rural firms in a district, many difficulties arising from sectional interests might be overcome, and rural industries would be in a better position to hold their own. A co-operative organization for the independent craftsmen in a number of industries, together with trade unions and industrial councils in the separate industries, appears to be the best plan for rural organization.

Commercial Organization

The need for the utmost economy in commerce also demands co-operative organization, both for buying where the material is not produced on the spot, and for selling where the manufacturer is not in direct touch with the customer. But co-operative societies need not necessarily dispense with the services of a private dealer. Middlemen there must be between producer and customer, whether these are the servants of a co-operative society or independent merchants, but there must not be too many of them, and they must render efficient service both to producer and to consumer. With most products it is probably better to reach a wide market by distributing them through the ordinary channels of the trade, but certain products could best be sold from special dépôts to a select public. The details of trade organization will vary according to circumstances, and there should be much elasticity. What is important for commerce as for production, is that there should be a sufficient supply of capital. One reason why trade through dealers is apt to be fluctuating is that they have not sufficient capital to 'hold' goods, and must therefore sell them quickly while there is a rush. Prices are apt to be cut very low because the merchants through lack of capital cannot deal with the better kinds of products which are, on other grounds, the most suitable for rural industries. A well-capitalized co-operative society would therefore be useful.

The needs of Rural Industries

These are briefly : for labour—higher standards of work and pay ; for production—cultivation of material, improvement in plant and personnel ; for commerce—a better and more flexible organization, with facilities for obtaining trade information and for placing products in the right market ; general adaptability, higher capitalization, and more and better houses. Running through all these needs is the need for education and the need for good communication. Much can be done to expedite and direct enterprise in the development of both ; little or nothing can be done in advance of this development. Therefore progress will necessarily be slow and will depend on the policy, and the method of carrying out the policy, with regard to education and transport. Private enterprise is essential ; in fact it is largely for the stimulation of the spirit of enterprise that

education is so badly needed. It may be thought that private enterprise will bring about such development as is desirable, that little good can be done by public effort, and that artificial stimulation might divert energy into wasteful channels. But it is clear that few of the needs of rural industries can be met by individual effort alone. Therefore wherever the development of rural industries is desirable there is a strong case for social action.

(a) *Education.* For progress in rural industries, as in other work, a liberal education is needed to develop the physical and mental faculties ; to encourage resourcefulness and application, and to strengthen will-power and discipline. This provides also the possibility of a richer social life in which every individual will take a place. But it must be supplemented by the best possible training and instruction for the career which each person is likely to follow.

Definite vocational training should not be allowed to encroach upon general education, and the two hundred and eighty hours a year during which attendance at a continuation school will be compulsory for adolescents not being educated in other schools, are none too long for general education. But technical training is also of great importance for the temporary and still more for the future efficiency of the boys and girls in industry, and there should be some definite co-ordination between the 'vocational' work done in school or at technical classes and the industries in which the pupils are engaged. The jealousy with which any power of the employer *qua* employer over the education of young employees is regarded by people interested in labour conditions may put difficulties in the way of industrial training. Much might be done to forestall or overcome these difficulties by co-operation between the representatives of the schools, both teachers and administrators, and representatives of employers, parents and young employees themselves, on bodies whose business it will be to work out the elastic provisions of the recent Education Act. It would be possible for a representative committee to devise a system of supervised apprenticeship—the supervision to consist at least of some method of selection of firms or workshops where there are skilled persons fit to teach, and of seeing that the boys and girls sent as apprentices have already acquired some knowledge which would guard against damage to tools and material. This training would be supplementary to work in school ; it would make the juvenile employees more

useful in their present vocation without the work being detrimental to them in after life.

There are a great many agencies in existence which share the responsibilities of education. If each is to fulfil the function for which it is best adapted, a wise correlation will be necessary between them all.

First, there are the State schools—primary, secondary, technical, evening classes, day continuation schools ; there are also special county instructors, and theoretically there are means for individuals with special talents to go to colleges or the universities. There are also training schemes for demobilized soldiers and war workers, under the Ministry of Labour, arranged locally by pensions' committees, employment bureaux, and education committees. The central departments concerned are the Board of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Labour. There is, in fact, ample opportunity for schemes to slip between many stools.

Secondly, there are the provisions made within the industries for apprentices and learners, and even where no special provision is made, the atmosphere of the workroom or factory where young people spend the hours in which they are, rather than in the schools, in touch with the realities of life, is potent for good or evil. Work done by boys or girls for money need not be obstructive to education ; on the contrary, the power of application then acquired may be extremely valuable, and it is important for every one to learn that no good work can be done without some drudgery, either one's own or some one else's. The training of young people is far too important to be left entirely to employers ; but the existence of industrial councils gives opportunities for policy with regard to training to be considered from the industrial point of view, and these bodies should be consulted in the matter of educational schemes. Workshops and factories which were also training schools, or training schools which were partly self-supporting workshops, would be useful as supplementary to the general education given in ordinary schools.

Thirdly, there are the societies for promoting adult education and various clubs and institutes which provide excellent opportunities for acquiring experience in co-operative effort in various directions. These, too, have local and central organizations with power to influence rural education, and their services should be enlisted in educational schemes.

Lastly, there is the home, a factor in education, not only in childhood but afterwards, too often ignored. Its influence may be negative or even obstructive ; on the other hand, the home may give the environment most favourable to the growth of individuality and resourcefulness needed for rural industry. The general home conditions are involved in the wages problem and the housing problem, and obviously have a great influence on rural industries. One great need of many rural families is more garden and workshop space and greater security at home.

(b) *Transport.* All these agencies should be taken account of in schemes for educational development. Before suggesting how this can be done it will be necessary to consider another great problem, that of transport, in relation to rural development. Until the national policy with regard to transport has been more clearly formulated, until local possibilities with regard to conveyance of goods and passengers have been studied more systematically, little can be known of the possibilities of rural industries. In respect of transport, individual producers are dependent very largely on social action, although the development of motors has increased individual resources to some extent.

The economic and social forces now at work point to the development of rural industries in and around rural towns rather than a wide dissemination of industry over scattered villages and homesteads. The advent of motors and bicycles has enabled a larger amount of rural labour to be concentrated, and has increased the importance of the country town as a social and economic centre. New educational developments will increase this tendency. Even for the people who cannot go to the neighbouring town to work, it will still be the centre of organization and distribution. Therefore success or failure of rural industries will depend largely on the way in which transport is developed, both between the country towns and the surrounding villages and from one town to another.

General Tendencies of Development

Where industrial expansion is probable, schemes for housing as well as for transport ought to be thought out in relation to such expansion. But it is as commercial centres that the rural towns are of most direct importance to rural industries, and if marketing facilities were developed, as

they could be, with more co-operative enterprise, the market town in the better fulfilment of its economic functions, would become the centre of many-sided activities, to the great benefit of the districts in which it is situated. Thus rural industries which might be regarded as of minor importance in view of great agricultural problems, assume greater importance owing to the opportunities which their economic development affords—if the problem is wisely handled—for assisting those tendencies which make for a more vigorous corporate life in rural districts.

Every possible use should be made of existing associations whose objects include the development of rural industries or the creation of conditions which would favour their growth. Among such associations are the Design and Industries Association, the Women's Institutes and their federations, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, the Home Arts and Industries Association and the various lace associations. There is also the newly founded Institute of Industrial Art, set up by the Board of Education and the Board of Trade, which has already bureaux of information both on commercial and on technical matters connected with production and sale, and should be of great service to organizations dealing with rural industries. The educational work of all these societies in inducing producers and consumers to consider the essentials of true economy in the making and using of goods is not the least important of their functions, and their influence can be traced in the increasing consideration given on the part both of manufacturers and of purchasers, to two great principles which govern art as well as economy—fitness to a purpose and excellence of workmanship. If greater funds were available this work could be extended with good economic and social results for the community as a whole. It is of considerable importance that the accumulated experience of such societies should not be wasted, especially as the agricultural committees now being established can include only a minority of members whose interests are not almost entirely agricultural.¹

¹ The Design and Industries Association, with special facilities for rural work, could do great service to rural industries, since it makes a point of working in co-operation with local trade and educational organizations. For suggestions applied to organizing needlework industries see pp. 164–173, *post*.

The Functions of Voluntary Associations

It would be an advantage if the central or national societies which are interested in rural industries could form a central advisory committee to deal with problems of production in their peculiar circumstances and with the commercial distribution of the products of these industries. Such a committee might form a medium for the collection and dissemination of information on technical methods, and on trade needs and possibilities. Much useful information, both on methods of production and on trade conditions, of which little advantage is now taken, might be made available to those who need it through a committee of this character. Similarly, within a county, or within an area covering several counties, local advisory committees might be formed for similar purposes within the area. Such local committees would both provide information for the national committee and obtain from them such information as was locally required.¹ The work of the voluntary associations in connexion with rural industries is still urgently needed, and there is much that they can do more cheaply and efficiently than any statutory authority. As the statutory committees are charged with the responsibility of taking steps for the development of rural industries, however, the work of these voluntary associations, so far as the local authorities are concerned, must be purely of an advisory character unless certain duties were expressly delegated to them by the statutory authority. Any advice which may be tendered would be much more reliable and would have more effect if it emanated from the general body of persons who have been especially interested in or concerned with industries, than if tendered by one society whose interests and experience are necessarily limited.

So far as the results obtained through this survey provide any reliable guidance, there is nothing in the recent history of rural industries which should lead to a hopeless view as to possibilities of future development, and so far as future conditions can be foreseen they do not give grounds for the confident enthusiasm sometimes evident in the advocates of the return to the craft systems and to work and residence in a rural environment. The future of the industries themselves largely depends upon the close study of local possibilities of the supply of raw material or of markets for produce, and upon the capacity of those in control of the

¹ A register of good craftsmen and craftswomen should be kept in each district, and copies supplied to various selling organizations.

CONCLUSION

industries to use technical knowledge, to organize production economically, and by some form of mutual action to organize the commercial system necessary to deal with the supplies of raw material and with the marketing of their finished products. It is no use expecting rapid progress, for schemes will be of little value unless they are flexible and capable of growth with the growth of education and public spirit. Even small schemes for co-operative effort will be useful, as will private enterprise directed to social service, and every movement which helps people to realize their common interest and common responsibility is valuable. The way of healthy growth is for the local people to think out practical solutions of their own problems.

PART II

REPORTS ON INDUSTRIES

CHAPTER I

THE WOODLAND INDUSTRIES

Growth and Sale of Underwood

THE underwood industries owe their existence to the local plantations of copsewood, and are derived from the varied occupations of the woodcutter and handyman who turned his wet days to account in making various articles according to the needs of the neighbourhood and the material at his disposal. It used to be the custom for a farmer to rent a copse, sometimes at a considerable distance from his farm, and employ a handyman to make hurdles, repair fences, and so on ; this man was also a thatcher. As soon, however, as a handyman was able to earn enough to buy a copse at the November sales, he did so, the custom being for 5s. in the pound to be paid on purchase and the remainder at the end of a year when the products had been sold. He would spend the winter cutting and sorting the wood, disposing of the waste for firewood and peasticks, selling the larger poles to the turners—unless he were a turner himself—and making hurdles and other small articles at his leisure during the year. He would also work at busy times on the farms until his trade had increased sufficiently for him to gain a livelihood from his craft and his holding. Then he would probably employ other woodmen to help him in the winter, or he might become an underwood dealer, employing craftsmen as well to make brooms or other articles out of the suitable material and selling the rest. Now it is usually the underwood dealers who employ the woodmen, the turners and broom-makers buying the particular kind of wood they need and having no waste to dispose of. Sometimes the owner of a turnery mill has to buy uncut copse and employ woodmen and hauliers, but it is not worth his while as a rule to carry on a retail trade and sell what he cannot use himself, and he prefers to buy from the dealers. Some underwood dealers are also timber merchants and work a saw-mill. It is interesting to see in the evolution

of these small industries the separation of function (which, however, is not complete), by which the dealer who owns capital in the form of horses, and who has the means of buying wood and paying wages for cutting, carting, and making up his material, supplies the craftsmen with work and the underwood mills with material.

The woodland crafts still keep their primitive character to a great extent, and, as will be seen, are in many cases carried on by woodmen. But machinery has been introduced into the turneries, and although the old pole and treadle lathes are still in use in some parts, the bulk of the turnery industry is concentrated in the power-driven underwood mills of Newbury and Thatcham. The underwood industries, therefore, can be divided into two distinct groups: (1) the manufacture in or near the woods of small articles, from bundles of faggots to rakes and hurdles; and (2) the turnery of Thatcham and Newbury in small factories worked by power.

It is proposed in this report to go fairly fully into the various industries, to show the possibilities of development where such exist, and to examine their bearing upon agriculture. But first it is necessary to deal with the growth and sale of underwood itself and to give some account of the labour in the woods.

The Kennet river, as it leaves the Marlborough hills, flows through a beautiful narrow valley bordered by sloping meadows, fields, and woods, which rise to the Lambourne Downs on the north and to the long ridge from Inkpen Beacon to within a few miles of Basingstoke on the south. On the north the ground which rises sharply is cut by steep gullies which carry the moisture down to the river. These gullies are the natural home of the alder and, being unfit for agriculture owing to their steep sides and clay bottoms, they are thickly planted with this and other soft woods of quick growth. These woods, cut down to the stools every ninth year, form the material for the turners of the neighbourhood. On the south of the Kennet the thick woodlands of North Hampshire are planted with copsewood under the forest trees. Gullies also occur in the midst of these woods. In some places the timber has grown too thick for underwood to grow well, except birch which, growing thick and bushy, is made into besoms. Hazel, growing in the gullies and, here and there where the clay comes to the surface, on the hills, is made into wattle or 'flake' hurdles and sheep cribs, but there is more wattle-work

farther south where hazel is more abundant. The poles of the pollard willow are used here as in Oxfordshire for farmers' gate-hurdles, while racing-hurdles are made of ash. The forest underwood which used to be cut for hop-poles is made into broom-sticks, rakes, barrel-hoops, and crate rods, or sold if big enough to the turners for mop-sticks, and other kinds of implement handles and as brushwood.

In the case of the wood grown in the gullies very little care is needed. Resetting and clearing is only required after the nine-yearly cutting, and a week's work at this time makes all the difference. The absorption of the moisture by the underwood as it grows is sufficient to drain the gullies so that they are fit for the men and horses at the next cutting. The result of choked ditches and scanty plantation is that the ground becomes so miry that the copsewood cannot be cleared until late in the season, and also it is inferior in quality and more difficult to work. In the words of an old woodman and hurdle-maker who has known the woods all his life : ' If the underwood is cleared of brambles and properly drained and reset so as to grow thick enough, it grows straight and kind ; otherwise it is knotty and crooked and this means more work all round. The horses cannot get down into the woods until summer nearly, there is more labour attached to cutting badly grown stuff, and there is more labour in making hurdles and more expense.'

Some figures have been obtained which show the difference in value of well-kept and ill-kept coppices, of which the following may serve as illustrations :

Thirty years ago a gully of $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres fetched £26. Little care was bestowed upon it and nine years later the price had fallen to £4 15s. an acre. After clearing and resetting it fetched £10 an acre. If it had not been reset it would have deteriorated still further.¹

On another estate, where the underwood had been allowed to deteriorate, the prices were as follows : in 1889 the average price was £5 an acre ; in 1893 the price ranged from £1 7s. 6d. to £9, but the wood was not so good and much of it was unsaleable. In 1908 the average price had fallen to £1 15s. an acre and then only four out of thirteen lots were sold.

For a copse of poles only, in 1904 one and a half acres sold for £18 5s., but in 1911, after neglect, it only fetched £3 an acre.

¹ All these figures relate to a period during which there was a decline in demand. This rise in value owing to proper care is therefore remarkable, and shows the wisdom of producing poles fit for turnery. If, however, all the coppice had been looked after, this rise might not have occurred.

The price of underwood was falling and a decline of the trade in underwood industries was steadily taking place for quite twenty years prior to the war. During and since the war conditions have altered ; foreign imports ceased ; an abnormal demand for mop-sticks for the Navy stimulated the turneries and sent up the prices of underwood, and there is now a big demand for wood products to make up for four or five years' shortage. How far the change is likely to be a permanent one must be a chief consideration in the whole question of the development of these rural industries. In this connexion, therefore, it is useful to trace the causes of the decline and to see whether they are still applicable to-day.

It is difficult to disentangle the causes of the slump, for in some cases they have reacted on one another. But the primary cause was no doubt the falling off of the demand for certain products, owing (1) to the substitution of big posts and wire for hop-poles and of iron for wooden barrel hoops ; (2) to the need for wattle-hurdles having declined with the decline of sheep-farming in Berks and the change in the breed of the sheep from those penned in hurdles to 'grass' sheep ; and (3) to a period of very cheap foreign imports. Brush factories, for instance, which used to depend on local turners for the wooden parts, moved to the ports, where bristles and ready-made turned handles, &c., could be obtained in large quantities and where large scale production could be carried on with improved machinery. The competition of foreign turnery has been attributed by the turners to the fact that the Norwegians and Germans made an art of growing underwood and the English do not, but the factor of close proximity to the raw material is at least as important in America and on the Continent as it is in Berkshire and Hampshire.¹

¹ The woodlands on the south bank of the Kennet are similar in character to the wooded districts of Sussex, and an account of the decline of wood-craft in Sussex may be applied to this district, where, however, the survival and industrial development of turnery has, until recently, been an incentive to the cutting and care of the coppice. See W. S. Ingram's article on Agriculture in the *Victoria County History of Sussex*, vol. ii.

² The grubbing up of a very large tract of hops and the use of creosote for preserving poles together with the use of wire has led to the hop-poles being a drug on the market. Cooper's work has declined, as has also the sale of toy-wood, i. e. backs of brushes, &c., as these are now largely imported from Germany. The design of the farm-house and cottage ovens, the use of coal in the cottages, the use of foreign firewood for fire-lighting has made the faggots almost unsaleable, with the result that the underwood and its products have fallen in price ; this has made what once used to

A second factor has been lack of transport facilities. On estates far from the railway prices of underwood have fallen considerably. For instance, on an estate well looked after but too far from the railway, underwood in 1893 fetched from 10s. to £3 7s. 6d. an acre. In 1903 it fetched from £1 to £8 an acre. But in 1904 the average was £4 10s. and it was unsaleable in outlying positions. In addition to the difficulty of selling underwood grown at a distance from a railway station, there is also the difficulty of obtaining the necessary labour, though more labour is involved where it has not been considered worth while to attend to the woods.

Game preservation by large landowners has also sent down the price of underwood. Young shoots are eaten off by rabbits, &c., and in many cases whole estates have been overrun with game, causing rapid deterioration of the underwood. If only two shoots survive to grow from a stool where there should be nine or ten, the wood is poor, knotty, and crooked.

With regard to these causes and present-day conditions : wooden barrel hoops are now very much in demand again, but this is possibly only temporary. Probably the falling off of the demand for hoops, crate rods, and wattle hurdles was inevitable and the cultivation under timber of the pliable and easily split woods for these would not pay unless suitable turnery poles could also be grown and sold. The small industries absorb the thinner wood which is cut with the poles ; it was as by-industries to the cutting of hop-poles that they flourished. As to foreign imports of turned goods, an underwood and timber merchant near Reading does not think that these will ever be so cheap again, even although the possibility of swift and cheap transport across the Atlantic is borne in mind. The opening of the proposed railway line from Newbury to Basingstoke would increase the value of the outlying woods and stimulate cultivation. But it has to be remembered that a demand for building land might again alter the situation both here and between

be a source of profit to be almost a source of annoyance to the farmer. The result has also been that the labourers have almost lost the art of wood-cutting, and on large woodland estates it is difficult, not only to sell the underwood, but even to get the wood out at all. Formerly cut at from ten to fifteen years, one may see in the woods underwood of twenty or more years' growth running to waste.'

The information collected along the Kennet district before reading this article shows the same causes to have been at work, the turneries and the besom-making being the only survivals of importance.

Newbury and Reading. It is reported that a paper mill near Thatcham which now employs about 300 hands is about to be enlarged to accommodate 1,000. Here, as everywhere, especially where any industrial expansion is contemplated, the shortage of houses is especially acute, but it is thought that Thatcham will grow quickly and become more important industrially than Newbury. As for game, preservation will probably be too costly for estates to be devastated as they were before the war. The argument of a bailiff that game used to provide a quantity of cheap food is hardly relevant to-day and, since game is preserved at a loss, the competition of game with industry is not an economic one in the same sense as competition between one industry and another, when both are run for profit. One way in which gamekeeping has added to the expense of woodwork is that landowners are not always willing for the wood to be stacked even at the edge of the woods for fear of its not being removed in good time before the breeding season, and this means carrying it farther for stacking or moving it twice. Sometimes they prefer to sacrifice the extra profit they might make by putting it up to auction, selling it direct to a man whom they can trust not to trample the covert. If landowners could be induced to reserve for covert only those woods which are at a distance from the railway and to cultivate or allow to be cultivated the best and most conveniently situated coppices, it would probably pay them. But in the case of old or neglected wood, the preliminary cutting and clearing might have to be done at a loss. That it would be in the interests of the locality to do so is certainly the opinion of those connected with the underwood industries.

We shall see in examining the conditions of labour in the woods that the situation is certainly improving and would be further improved by the better care of the woods. That proper attention to underwood in the best localities would pay is apparent from the increased activity in turnery, but unfortunately the question whether a landowner would consider it worth his while to make it pay is an entirely different one. For instance, an estate agent contributed a preference on the part of the landowners for timber rather than underwood to the fact that timber bears a saleable value in the case of an emergency such as the payment of death duties. It would be worth considering whether certain coppices could not be rented for a term of nine years or more by people interested in their cultivation..

The neglect of the underwoods has undoubtedly had a serious effect on labour, for it is only in well-grown coppice that a man can earn enough for the work to prove attractive. The work in the woods is skilled work and lasts from November to May, but wet days are wasted, and in a wet season the work will be delayed and spun out until the wood is dry and no longer 'kind', i. e. sappy and easy to cut. The sooner cutting begins after the sales the better, while the sap is still in. This explains the importance of draining, so that early access may be possible.

General depression, lack of openings, hard work, and the loneliness of a woodman's life are all quoted as the causes which have driven the skilled men to the towns. 'A man does not expect to colonize in England.' Even in the palmier days which the old men remember before the slump, there is no reason to think that the woodman's life was not a hard and precarious one. In any case the attraction of the towns has drawn away a great number of the younger men. But under the high rates paid for government contracts the men are coming back and the labour difficulty has been exaggerated. One forester said that under government contracts not yet finished (July 1919) woodmen were well paid and that the rates would never fall so low as they had been. There is practically no organization of labour though attempts in this direction are being made by some of the younger men, and the work is paid by piece rates. The problem of payment is difficult, for not only is there very great variation in pace and skill between one man and another, but the work varies from day to day and from one piece of ground to another. One man said that men earned £4 and £5 a week in the woods during the war while the others were away in the army. Asked whether this was true or not a hurdle-maker said, 'No; some men are not earning £2 10s. even now.' He meant at that season (July) for he went on to explain that now the wood had got so dry a man could only cut one piece in the time in which he could have cut three a few months ago. To illustrate the uncertainty in a day's earnings he said that one man may be able, in the course of doing other work, to throw aside fifteen or sixteen bundles of good straight stakes which only need tying up, whereas another man might find only two bundles.

Piece rates are sometimes supplemented by regular cash payments where the result of the week's work is scanty. One firm, for instance, was paying £2 a week until the work

should be finished and would pay up the remainder on piece rates per bundle at the end. A dealer gave the following information with regard to supplementing the rates : a day's work on gully wood might be worth about £2 or 30s., whereas on firewood it would not pay the men's wages. So the dealer puts an extra price on the poles. ' You can't charge on firewood.' This again illustrates the importance of looking after the gullies.

It is evident that on a good piece of ground and in a favourable season men do earn £4 and £5 a week on piece rates, but that the average earnings are very much lower and that it depends on a private bargain between the particular woodman and his employer whether he is compensated for his loss of time and bad material. The solution found by paying a weekly sum and making up the rest at the end points to the desirability of a minimum time rate to meet the cases where piece rates for the week would be insufficient. There is a similar custom in paying wages for the harvest, overtime being paid up at Michaelmas. The lump sum received at this time of year is particularly useful, either in buying winter clothing, &c., or for investing in coppice wood at the November sales, or for any other form of stock.

The scanty pay and the openings elsewhere for mechanical skill have undoubtedly been the main causes of the labour difficulty. The manager of the principal turnery works said that with the good pay for government contracts more wood came in during the winter of 1918–19 than he would have thought possible. Before this he would have felt the shortage of material acutely had not fifty of his men been taken for the war.

Woodmen, dealers, auctioneers, and manufacturers, all agree as to the neglect of the coppices and gullies. A dealer said with regard to the present situation, that there was as much underwood in this district as there was labour to deal with it. But we have seen that the piece rates on poor woods do not yield attractive earnings. We have also seen that the cutting of remote and too old coppice does not pay for the labour, for it is then only fit for firewood, and what is lost on firewood has to be made up on the price of the poles. Much turns, therefore, on the question of cultivation. New turneries are being started which may be expected to absorb more well-grown poles ; their prosperity obviously depends on good cultivation as also does the prosperity of the other industries. The importance

of attention to the coppices is borne out by the evidence of the turners who can give a far better price for well-grown stuff, the material being only a small item in the whole expense. On every hand the admonition is to 'look after the gullies'. Whether it is also worth while to look after the forest underwood is not so clear since (1) there is more labour needed than in the case of gully wood; (2) young shoots are apt to be eaten off by rabbits who will not touch the alder of the gullies and valleys, unless driven into it, and wire-netting would be prohibitive; and (3) the return on the smaller underwood is less than on the poles used for turnery.

The difficulty of finding a remedy for slovenly cultivation of the raw material arises from the fact that the responsibility for the care of the underwoods is not in the hands of the people chiefly interested in underwood manufactures. In the case of osier beds, it is worth the osier merchant's or the basket-maker's while to rent the beds, for the return on osier beds is an annual one and, as with underwood, to buy them standing means to buy poor stuff from neglected beds and to spend more on their preparation. Turners, underwood dealers, and small craftsmen, on the other hand, will not rent and look after a coppice for the sake of the return nine years hence, especially as the trade in underwood is such a fluctuating one. Farmers used to do so and perhaps when good handymen are once more available, they will do so again. It would probably pay to give good wages to a skilled handyman, for in the neighbourhood the surplus underwood could be sold to advantage. Landowners do not as a rule realize the value of the gullies and the few old woodmen who are left, who know every coppice and have watched the sales for a lifetime, who know as none else knows what is required for cultivation and where it would pay to spend money on clearing and setting, are powerless unless a particular landowner will take their advice. For instance, a gully was quoted by one of these experts in underwood and woodcraft where with an expenditure of about £5 for resetting after the periodical cutting, the value of the gully rose in nine years from £20 5s. to £45. If the coppice had not already fallen into neglect the cost of resetting would have been still less. 'What is required', said this woodman, 'is for a man to go round the coppices after every cutting to see to the clearing of the ditches and brambles and the planting of the right variety, e. g. of 'long-top' willow in

place of dead stools. He quoted another instance where a change of ownership had meant a cessation of all interest in the underwood and consequent deterioration.

Underwood Turnery

It used to be the custom for mop-stick handles, chair-legs, &c., to be made up in the woods where the poles had been cut or the felled trees lopped. These were made on pole lathes, and one of these lathes was shown in the workshop of a chair-maker at Aldbourne who had just resumed chair manufacture. He is now using an oil engine for his saw and his lathe, and keeps the pole lathe as a curiosity. He said that these pole lathes used to be fixed up in the Wycombe woods by the chair-leg turners.¹ But the only pole lathe which has actually been found in use is that of the elm bowl turner of Bucklebury Common, near Newbury, mention of whom will be found later.² The mop-stick turners of Crookham Common use a treadle lathe with a fly-wheel, and work at home in an outhouse where there is a tank for steaming the poles so that they can be straightened. The shavings are used to heat the water for the tank.

Forty or fifty years ago, when Thatcham Broadway used to be filled with cart-loads of rakes and broom and mop handles, there were numbers of mop-stick turners at work. A Crookham turner used to employ a dozen or more workers to help him. But the use of machinery in the Thatcham turneries brought competition, and the market was captured and turners absorbed in these factories. One of the Crookham turners was visited. This old man, at the time unwell and unable to work, said he used to turn 100 mop-sticks in a day, but only got 3s. 9d. for them. Later he got 4s. 6d. to 5s. It had always been poorly paid, worse than agricultural labour, but he had done well and put by. 'It is the competition of machinery, they say. Young men won't learn the craft.' Two other turners, however, had worked on Crookham Common up to the war. These were of army age, had been away, and had not yet returned. A rake-maker who also has a lathe said it did not pay him to do turnery, though he sometimes did a little to oblige. Asked whether it would be worth while to work these small lathes by power, e. g. by means of an oil engine such as carpenters use, he thought not. In order to make an engine pay, it has to be kept working, and he evidently did not consider that the trade in mop-sticks would be large enough. Obvi-

¹ See p. 102.

² See p. 112.

ously a cottage turner would have little chance in the close neighbourhood of factories making the same class of goods.

About five miles farther south, in the heart of the woodland country, there is a pill-box maker who sells by the dozen gross to wholesale chemists in London or anywhere where he can get an order. He gives an estimate, and though sometimes his price is too high, he is not in the least afraid of competition, though there is some. He has two lathes, one worked by a treadle and the other by an oil engine. He is going to train his son of fourteen, who was helping him by 'finishing' on the treadle lathe, to this trade. He spoke with regret of the lack of scope for an intelligent lad in the village schools, and thought that this was one of the causes of incompetency in rural districts. He does not expand because he has no capital. He buys the underwood which is best for his purpose before it is disposed of elsewhere. He said there was not another turner of this kind between here and London. A resident spoke of his great skill and accuracy, and said he ought to be turning billiard balls or articles for which great precision was needed. Pill-boxes are as a rule made in great quantities on automatic lathes.

Of the three brushwood factories in this district, one is worked by an oil engine, another by a water wheel supplemented by a steam engine when the river is low, and the largest by steam power only. The staple trade is in broom and mop-stick handles, brush heads, &c., and while the firms have been at work on Government orders old customers have been neglected. Their normal trade will have to be worked up again, and the manufacturers are considering development on side lines in case of a slump should foreign imports be resumed. The largest factory, which employs eighty hands, does not turn out more of the staple products than the other firms, but a large quantity of nursery chairs are sent to Birmingham and certain western towns. The handles, japanned brush heads, &c., go to the brush works in London, Oldham, Ireland, and all over the country. The present owner of this factory took over an existing one in 1889 and greatly increased it. His success is attributed not only to the fact of a fortune having been left him which put capital at his disposal, but to the hard work and high reputation and old standing of this family which has been in the trade for generations. He believes that there is a promising future for household goods and

toys, and was ready to push certain new lines, but shortage of labour made it at present impossible.

With regard to expansion, however, he said that the business was limited : (1) by material, which is nearly all local though he does sometimes buy from Somerset and Dorset ; (2) by labour, which is what the neighbourhood can supply ; (3) by demand. Though he could push and increase the scale largely he would have to cut profits to a minimum, for the more costly labour and material would increase the cost of production. He could get the same profits on larger returns, but it was not worth his while, and he believed that this method 'put down labour' and prefers to leave a little to everybody. He does not do more in the mop-stick line than the others. Skipping-ropes, and small rush-seated chairs with stained woodwork, were amongst the articles he could turn out. Another firm had tried wooden spades, but the price offered by a Reading firm was too low though he said the retail price was high.

The foreman at this works stated that much good material was wasted which farther west would be used for bobbins. Ordinary furniture cannot be made of soft underwood as it will not take a polish. Japanning is done, the articles after painting being put in a furnace for which shavings supply the fuel. The steam engines are worked by coke furnaces.

The shortage of good material has already been mentioned. One turner was seriously thinking of moving farther south where the underwood had not recently been cut. It was reported that three new turneries are being started in the district, one of these being already opened, close to the biggest turnery ; of the others there was no trace, unless one referred to was the revived chair-making industry at Aldbourne above Hungerford. These chairs are similar to the staple product of Wycombe ; Windsor chairs of beech and elm. There is also a furniture and toy works at Newbury which is expanding and employing a considerable number of girls. Underwood is brought from farther up the river by traction engine. Regret was expressed at the neglect of the canal and the obstruction caused by weeds which have not been cleared. It was thought that more use would soon be made of the canal.

The labour difficulty was obviously due very largely to the war. At the biggest turnery about eighty men are employed and a few women for japanning ; at the smaller one there were thirty, and at another only three boys and

two men at that time. As many as fifty woodmen have at times been employed in the woods in winter by this firm, which also deals in firewood, &c. The oil engine is too small, and the employer would welcome cheaper electricity but does not believe it will come for many years ; at present electricity from the town would be too expensive. The head of the larger firm said that electricity would be the saving of the small industries.

The workers are organized in the Amalgamated Society of Woodworking Machinists. Hours had been reduced from 59 pre-war to 54½ a week, and earnings had risen about 125 per cent. The workers appear to be on good terms with their employers though they are always asking for more. The industry is still in the stage where the employer is personally acquainted with all his workers. There is, so far as a visitor can judge, more community life and enterprise in this village than in any other large village investigated. This employer and his family take a leading part in local activities. The women are mostly employed in the paper-bag-making department of the paper mills, and the expansion of this factory will absorb many more. A few are employed making halters and wagon sheets and sacks, but the piece rates in this industry do not appear attractive. In this village there is industrial work for both sexes ; it may be contrasted with Woodstock, where a scheme for training women in gloving fell through owing to the lack of openings for men and the consequent necessity of taking the women from Oxford. Owing to the housing shortage the Thatcham employers are faced with the expense of bringing their labour from a distance ; at present they employ men and women from their own and surrounding villages.

Some of the turnery is done on automatic lathes which do not turn out quite such good work and cannot be used for tapering poles. The earnings on these lathes, the use of which is quite unskilled, are about the same as on the hand lathes ; piece rates are lower but the work is quicker. In America, however, automatic lathes are used for tapering wood in making furniture, &c., in huge quantities. The tools in automatic or 'copying' lathes are sooner blunted than in the hand work. Near Inkpen, girls have been employed on automatic lathes, but they have not been found of much use on tools which require more intelligence. There is a prejudice against women being employed as turners. Although turnery is not considered an unhealthy occupation

it is unsuitable for people with weak chests owing to the chaff which flies from the lathes.

As for the prospects, granted a plentiful supply of well-grown poles from the surrounding coppices, there is a good opening for kitchen and nursery requisites of good quality, toys, small chairs, and so on. In the very cheap lines there is little chance of competing with the large-scale production of America, but manufacturers agree that a good market will be found in the better working-class homes. Asked whether he thought of 'art goods' the biggest manufacturer replied : ' All our goods are "art goods", ' meaning that even in dustpan brushes he depended on quality and appearance for his reputation.

Barrel Hoop-making and Crate Rods

The decline of hoop-making and cooperage in Sussex is described by Mr. L. F. Saltzmann in his article on Industries in the *Victoria County History of Sussex*. He gives the number of coopers for this county as 368 in 1871 and 284 in 1901. By 1908 there were only twelve coopers and ten firms of hoop-makers at work. In 1798, he tells us, barrel hoops were sent to the West Indies for sugar casks, the London sugar merchants supplying the market for them.

A similar decline has taken place during the same period in the district between the Kennet and Basingstoke, and the industry has almost ceased to exist. Information was given by a local underwood dealer to the following effect : ' It (underwood) is a fluctuating trade. Take, for instance, barrel hoops. I used to sell thousands to London merchants, who in turn sent them to the West Indies, for sugar barrels. I remember selling as many as 1,600 bundles at one time. Then the trade declined. Seven or eight years ago I sent a quantity to Midgham station and lost $\frac{1}{4}d.$ a bundle, i. e. on the labour, not counting the price of wood. Now I sell none.' Yet at the moment the demand for wooden hoops has revived and a good price is being given for them.

A timber merchant in the same district also spoke of the trade with London merchants in sugar-barrel hoops for the West Indies. Then iron hoops had been used, the demand slackened, and gradually the industry died out. He explained that barrel hoop-making takes about a month to

learn, and though it would be worth while at the moment to make them, no one will do so. Only one old man was discovered at making the hoops in the woods.

The process of hoop-making is as follows : underwood of a flexible nature, for example, willow, is split with a tool similar to that used by basket-makers to split osier wands, and by means of a simple measuring apparatus, consisting of stakes driven into the ground at correct intervals, the wands are cut to varying lengths, each size having a traditional name, still in use. They are then bound in bundles and sent away to be bent round the barrels. The bending used to be done near Newbury. New wooden hoops are put on the 'empties' from an imported cargo before using them again. These hoops are used for grocery and fruit barrels, and also for fish barrels, but not for beer casks.

Wooden bands are noticeable at the present time on many barrels, but the opinion of the merchants as to the future of the trade is not known. When trade in barrel hoops is slack, orders for crate rods for potteries have been taken, these being cut in a similar manner but not so fine.

Cooperage

Coopering has practically ceased to be a rural industry owing : (1) to the employment of coopers at breweries where barrels are made ; and (2) to the concentration of the industry where iron and foreign timber are easily obtainable. A cooper at Banbury was interviewed, and he explained that local cooperages were now merely repairing shops. The existence of his firm at Banbury was, he said, due to an old established connexion ; he gets his iron from Rotherham, his wood from Germany and Russia, while his customers are at Portsmouth and elsewhere in the south. He could take on forty skilled men and four or six apprentices at once, but has difficulty in getting them. This is due to the fact that a great many coopers have been killed and that those who are left prefer to work in the breweries. This man sends out his repairing to local coopers, as it does not pay his men to be taken off their work to do it, and as a skilled cooper is needed to repair badly damaged barrels, it would appear that there is a certain amount of work in repairs for a cooper in a country town.

¹ Although of little importance it is interesting to note the other uses to which wands of willow and other pliable and easily split woods, such as Spanish chestnut, are put. They are split into fine bands for

The Besom Industry

Besom-making is carried on largely by the inhabitants of the adjoining parishes of Baughurst and Tadley. In North Hampshire birchwood grows on the sandy soil of the commons which stretch from Baughurst to Silchester and Mortimer, and also in the enclosed woods of pine and oak. In 1911 the two parishes together had a population of 1,835, but the houses are scattered over a wide area, and even the largest group can hardly be described as a village.

Like hurdle-makers, broom-makers are usually men of mixed occupation. For instance, of the seven broom-makers mentioned in the directory, one is a coal merchant and one a coppice dealer respectively, employing labour for

besom brooms and used for baskets by the gipsies. At Banbury an old gipsy and his wife, both eighty years of age, split up the stakes of pollard willow and plait them with remarkable speed and dexterity into baskets, which are used chiefly for packing Banbury cakes. They have done it all their life, but none of their eleven children still living (out of a family of sixteen) can do it as they do, 'because they would not let them out of school to learn.' This couple, who never went to school, had a varied career—harvesting, thatching, hop-picking, &c., but settled down thirty years ago in a cottage in Banbury. Like pillow-lace, this form of basket-making is a case of handicraft for which 'lissomeness' of fingers must be acquired in childhood. Although no one would wish to keep children in school for very long hours at a particular kind of handicraft, yet it seems probable that the neglect of handwork in the schools has been one cause of the disinclination and incompetence for handicraft in later years. Round about Warwick there are still a few gipsies who make these chip baskets.

In order to split the strips to the required width, a tool is used which is made of watch springs set in a wooden handle like the teeth of a comb through which the bands are rapidly drawn. At Aldbourne, seven miles from Hungerford, the old people remember the time when in almost every cottage there was a hand-loom on which willow, split with a watch-spring comb set much finer than for the baskets, into threads like coarse horse hair, was woven into hat squares, bags, &c. The material was called 'wass' or 'wace'. There was an attempt to revive it a few years ago, but all the looms are believed to have been broken up for firewood. An interesting revival has taken place, however, in the chair industry where, owing to the expense of cane during the war, many chairs have been caned with an imitation made of fibre 'or any rubbish' varnished to look like cane, to the early disappointment of purchasers of these so-called cane-seated chairs. 'Wass' used also to be dyed and sold to fill empty grates. But fashion has changed and probably the wass industry is a thing of the past. It would, however, be an instructive and exceedingly pleasant occupation for school children to learn to split and comb pollard willow, to dye and plait it into baskets and weave it into shopping bags, and, considering the expensive apparatus often used for children's occupations and toys, it would be useful to teachers to know the possibilities of old watches and the 'lop' of pollard willows for the school workshop and toy cupboard.

broom, hurdle, and barrel hoop-making. Nearly all the inhabitants of the two parishes have a little land and many of them own ponies.

Not many years ago broom-makers used to travel as far as Oxford, Banbury, and Leighton Buzzard with cartloads of besoms. Now the chief demand for besoms comes from the iron works of the Midlands and South Wales, whither they are dispatched by rail, and where they are used for brushing the slag from the pig-iron, the heat of the metal burning the twigs to the right length. A constant supply is needed for this purpose, and it is expected that there will always be a demand. Wire brooms have been tried, but have proved less satisfactory. Collieries and factories of various kinds absorb large quantities. A Monmouth firm of coopers has also bought large numbers of Baughurst besoms for thirty or forty years. Sometimes they are sold direct to ironmongers and old connexions are kept up. A broom-maker on the edge of Sherwood Forest in Nottingham spoke of a great scarcity of besoms and said that, owing to the fumes from the collieries the forests had deteriorated, and the number of woodmen and 'broom-squires' had greatly decreased. Seed merchants are also short of good besoms.

The broom-makers all work on separate orders and drive with their own brooms to the station, three or four miles away. There is no attempt at co-operative selling, and the isolation and independence of the scattered inhabitants makes it doubtful whether they could as yet be induced to co-operate as they might, for instance, in making joint contracts with the iron works. At present sales are brisk, but the trade in besoms for domestic and garden use has seasonal fluctuations, and organizations which would secure a steady demand and supply would be useful.

The work consists of sorting the twigs according to length, taking a bundle of them and binding it with a band of withy; a stake is then driven in which has first been peeled and pointed with a two-handled knife curved somewhat like a sickle. The broom-maker sits on a 'broom horse' which has a grip to hold one end of the band while binding the twigs; this is afterwards tucked in with a box-wood tool called a 'hundred putter', which is polished like ivory by constant use. Skill is required in gathering quickly a bundle of right length, and in drawing the band tightly. 'It's old-fashioned; you can't make besoms by steam.' In Nottinghamshire a treadle clamp was used which ex-

peditied the gathering into bundles, and helped to secure uniformity ; also a slight improvement in the shape of the tool like the ' hundred putter ' increased the strength and speed of the binding. Here cane was used instead of withy for the bands. Spanish chestnut was also used in Berkshire with good results.

The sorting is done by women and girls and provides them with an occasional day's work in the summer. It is poorly paid and it is difficult now to get them to do it, work in the saw-mills and elsewhere having raised their standard of wage. They can make 2s. or possibly 3s. a day sorting at the present rates. The men say it would not pay them to do it themselves as there is much wood work of other kinds for them to do. This is probably true, and sorting is not hard work. But it would pay them to pay the women better. Male labour is also paid by piece rates, and these have risen 300 per cent. on pre-war rates, the maker now getting 1s. 6d. for a dozen brooms. Piece workers can earn £3 a week on the present rates. Broom-makers have been approached as to training disabled soldiers, but they appear anxious to keep the industry for their own families, and there was some hesitation in giving information. Retail prices have risen enormously. At the present time they could sell many more brooms than they can make ; one maker had enough material for two years stacked outside his house and was waiting for his son to be demobilized. The twigs require seasoning, and are better for being kept. The reluctance to increase the number of broom-makers does not appear to be justified, but it was natural during a time of booming trade when the men were waiting for their sons to be discharged from the army. Reluctance to employ labour is very general among small producers, the reason given being sometimes the high wages and sometimes the difficulty of managing the men.

This industry is an interesting example of a part-time occupation lucrative to the countryman who combines wooding with agricultural labour and allotment culture. There is ample local material on the one hand, and the likelihood of a steady demand for industrial purposes on the other. There is a keen demand for small holdings, but not much land suitable and rents have risen. Doubt is expressed whether the best use is made of the land. One instance with regard to the commons is that heather, which is also used for besoms, though it is inferior to birch, and heather besoms are much less in demand, is constantly burnt by

mischievous boys before it grows tall enough for use. Underwood, too, on the commons, is taken before it is mature for use. It is felt that some of the waste land might with advantage be brought under cultivation.

Hurdle-making.

Hurdle-making used to be and still is in some cases an itinerant trade, the hurdle-maker going from farm to farm and working up the farmer's material. It is not always a specialized occupation; several carpenters are to be found who make ladders, hurdles, and sheep-cribs to order.

The material used for gate hurdles is ash and willow, and occasionally chestnut. Ash is used for race-course hurdles and these fetch a better price than others. The larger willow poles are also used for ladders, ash being used for the rungs. But poles for long ladders are imported from Norway, the English ones being usually too crooked and easily bent. English fir is also used where it is available.

Wattle hurdles are made of hazel withies twisted backwards and forwards over stakes, and are preferred by some shepherds as giving more shelter. They have to be made early in the year, while the wood is flexible, whereas gate hurdles can be made at any time. Wattle work is very hard work and is best done in dry weather, for if the bark is wet the hands are apt to slip and be hurt. A great number of wattles used to be sent down the river to London for gangways and platforms for barges.

Hurdle-making has almost died out in Berkshire, there being little local demand owing to the change in the breed of sheep. There the usual custom is for the hurdle-makers to be employed by wood-dealers. In this way they get good material, as they can discard for other purposes what is not suitable.

In Oxfordshire hurdle-making is a more settled, independent craft than in the Kennet district where there are alternative woodcrafts and a good deal of mixed and seasonal work. The trade here runs in families; it was discovered, for instance, that the five sons of a hurdle-maker had all set up independently in different parts of the country. The practice is for hurdle-makers to buy willow and ash poles and make them up at home. The poles are usually bought growing and have to be cut and carted at the hurdle-maker's expense, so that a man who keeps a horse and cart is at an advantage. Hurdle-makers who cannot buy and carry under

favourable conditions have a hard struggle. To buy poles from the farmers, carry them home, and sell hurdles to the farmer again is not an economical arrangement and for a man with no other resources it appears to be more satisfactory to be employed by the farmers for hurdle-making, repairing fences, &c., on the premises, as is done in Berkshire. But work in a yard at home is preferred to work in remote fields, and in bad weather time would be lost without some alternative occupation. It was found that several hurdle-makers keep public-houses, and evidently the additional source of income is valuable in providing sufficient capital for buying up material at favourable seasons.

The opinion as to hurdle-making being very hard work is unanimous, and it appears that the hours of work have been very long. One hurdle-maker stated that machinery had been tried, but without success. Farmers complain of the scarcity of good hurdle-makers. A Berkshire maker thought that the shortage of labour was partly due to the unwillingness to teach the younger men for fear there should be too many and that the prices would fall. It is a practice here for the purchaser of underwood to employ labour in the woods, but to keep hurdle-making in his own hands.

As with other woodcraft, the speed of the work depends largely on the way the material is grown; if not regularly cut, poles and withies grow crooked and knotty and are not easily split into suitable pieces. The quality of the nails is also important. Since the war, not only have they greatly increased in price, but there have been fewer to the pound and these have been clumsy and easily bent and broken. The nails used before the war were said to have been German, the inferior ones now in use come from Bristol.

As to prices and piece rates, there is a good deal of variation. The hurdles themselves vary in size and form, some having six bars and others only five. The estimates as to the number of hurdles which can be made in a day also vary considerably, and the men differ in speed and skill. The following examples of rates and prices were given:

Berkshire

A dealer's selling price of gate hurdles had risen from 11s. a dozen pre-war to 32s. (August 1919). He had latterly been paying 15s. a dozen for making and said a good workman could make 10 or 12 a day with good wood. One hurdle-

maker said 7 a day, another said 8 or 9, but with the picked wood from the dealer the work would be more rapid. An auctioneer said that prices of hurdles had risen from 7s. to 30s. per dozen in the wood, and from 8s. 6d. to 32s. delivered.

A hurdle-maker quoted the price of ash hurdles as 45s. and 50s. a dozen (July 1919). He was selling at 45s. on his premises to trainers of racehorses. It would not pay him to make the cheaper sort because of carting the willow. He was selling wattle hurdles at 30s. a dozen, and sheep cribs, which he said would last seven or eight years, at 2s. 6d. each. Farmers, he said, prefer to waste half their hay, allowing it to be trodden in, rather than afford the cribs. This man is a highly skilled craftsman. With good wood he could sometimes make fifteen wattle hurdles in a day. 'Some wood grows so much kinder than others.' A blacksmith in this district said that wattle-hurdles had risen from 9d. to 3s. 9d. each, and were not worth the present price. Few of the hurdle-makers can make them properly now.

Oxfordshire

For willow-hurdles pre-war prices were quoted as 11s. and 12s. a dozen; prices in the summer of 1919 as 24s., 25s., 26s., 27s. 6d., the highest price quoted being 30s. by a man who said his son was charging more because he had seven children. The latter hurdles, however, may have been made of ash, this man being also a ladder-maker. Another hurdle-maker was selling ash hurdles at 35s. This was in the Cotswold district where the hurdles are larger.

As for wages, a hurdle-maker employing four men including his own son was paying them 35s. a week in February 1919, the district agricultural wage being about 30s. The hurdles he said were nearly double (at 2s. each), the wages nearly double and haulage double.

Another man was in July charging 12s. a dozen for making, supplying the nails himself. The nails at the present price of 5½d. a lb. would cost him nearly 2s. for a dozen hurdles. He can make eight or nine hurdles on a good day working from 5 or 6 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m. He has no regular meal-times; in summer he works twelve hours a day on an average. He knows he has not put up his prices enough, and would prefer regular work with stated hours. On his own evidence he could not have been making more than

6s. 8d. or 7s. 6d. even on a good day, that is, when he felt well. Obviously the hours were far too long.

The costs depend largely on the proximity of the material and are difficult to estimate. Willow poles are usually bought by the head or 'top' of a pollard, the price being about double the pre-war price. One man was paying 10s. a day for cutting and hauling, and employing another man for loading. The uncut poles cost about 2s. a head. Another man had bought cut poles from a farmer at 14s. a score; these might make fifteen or possibly twenty hurdles, but the haulage would be an additional expense. One man had to pay as much for haulage as the price of the poles, and another did not find it paid him to make willow hurdles on account of there being no pollard willows quite near. The complaint was made that the farmers had not cut their willow, which was probably owing to the shortage of labour during the war.

We see that in spite of the small demand for hurdles in Berkshire the rates are higher than in Oxfordshire. A young hurdle-maker in Berkshire had been trying to get hurdle-makers to combine for fixing prices and rates, but finds that they will not keep to the arrangements made. A hurdle-maker who admitted that his prices were too low was a Workers' Union secretary. In other cases we find the price varying according to the needs of the craftsman's family. Hurdle-makers who are employed by farmers get the help of their Trade Unions in settling piece rates. But the amount of work involved in hedging, fencing, and hurdle-making, varies according to the material, the season, and the distance to be walked, so that a sufficient wage in one case would be quite inadequate in another. This shows that the system of employing casual labour for these jobs on piece rates is not very satisfactory.

As for demand, it seems that there has been a ready sale for hurdles, but it is difficult to foretell the future position, for the present demand is abnormal owing to four years' shortage. The market is not only local; hurdles are sent to the north of England and to Scotland from these counties. Owing to the present shortage of labour, orders have to be refused. In neither county was it thought that wooden hurdles would be replaced by iron ones or wire.

To be a skilled hurdle-maker it does not seem necessary as in the case of basket-making, to follow the trade as a whole-time occupation. It was said that part-time basket-

makers could not maintain the necessary speed to make the work pay, but hurdle-making is harder and more monotonous work, and this, with the long hours and poor returns, has made it unpopular. The less fortunate hurdle-makers are not putting their sons to the trade. This no doubt is partly due to the attraction of the high price given for boy labour during the war, and the problem of 'earning' versus 'learning' for young people is one of urgency in all skilled trades.

Rake-making

Thatcham was at one time an important centre of the rake-making industry, but times have changed and on inquiry only two rake-makers were discovered where doubtless there used to be dozens. In fact it was reported that ironmongers had experienced difficulty in getting rakes this summer, and the rake-maker who was visited, and who had just returned from the Army, expected to prosper. He and his father worked together and employed one old man. He said that a good man could earn on piece rates 30s. to 35s. (Probably since then the rates have increased.) He and his father naturally made more as they shared the profits. He explained his method of working. He cuts ten dozen at one time, the next day he planes them, then he sets them (with teeth) and lastly puts them together. For these, which represent about four days' work for three men, he gets 120s. The father has no desire to try new methods, but the son is contemplating the use of machinery in his work. He does a little turnery in addition to rake-making, but an engine would not pay for this alone. He is trying to invent a machine which would work the tool which smooths the surface round and round the rake handles. These are longer than, and not so straight as mop-sticks and are, therefore, unsuitable for turning in a lathe. This man is doing very well and is anxious to expand ; he is very much interested in the question of electricity.

The increase in the use of hay-making and other machinery was mentioned in this district as a cause of the decline in agricultural earnings from those of an earlier generation, having led to less employment at piece-rates during the harvest and less employment of women in the fields. Probably the use of hay-making machinery caused the decline in the Thatcham rake-making industry, but there is still a considerable demand to be met and the industry is suitable to an underwood district.

Conclusion to the Underwood Industries

It is clear that the prosperity of the Kennet Valley woodland industries depends on increasing and improving the supply of underwood in the most favourably situated copses, for on good material labour is saved and a better price commanded, while haulage of wood in its raw state, even over a few miles, adds seriously to the expense of working it up. Expert attention to the woods is therefore of great importance. Woodcraft is often said to be dying out with the older woodmen. But this need not be. Skilful men, if rare, can still be sought out and their intimate knowledge of the locality can be handed on, and supplemented by the knowledge of others with a wider outlook.

Chair-leg Turnery and Chair-making

Timber industries fall into a different category from the underwood industries, for the two materials are rarely dealt with at the same works or by the same dealers. Timber industries of the district include the making of chair-legs and chairs, an example of wooden bowl-making, turnery for carpenters, cabinet makers and builders, a few industries carried on at saw-mills, and wheelwrighting and carpentry which are considered separately in Chapter III, Part I.

Chair-leg Turnery. The beech woods of the Chilterns provide the material for an industry which has much in common with the underwood turnery of the Kennet valley. Chair manufactories can be seen in various stages of industrial development—from the primitive workshop of the woods to the large factories at Wycombe. These factories are supplied with a considerable proportion of their chair-legs by turners in the surrounding villages, but they also obtain both parts and material from abroad. In some instances not only chair-leg turnery, but the making of whole chairs, is carried on in village workshops; parts, such as seats, being in some instances supplied from a factory. But most village turners or 'chair bodgers' confine themselves to the making of legs which they sell to the factories, mainly at Wycombe.

In the manufacture of chair-legs, primitive pole lathes are still in use, and in the Wendover neighbourhood these are still set up here and there out in the woods, the turner building himself a warm shelter of chips and shavings with a roof of poles and straw. As a rule, however, the turners work in a shed at home. Young beech trees, or the thinner

branches of larger trees which have been felled for timber, are used for chair-legs. A double-handed saw is used for sawing them into logs of the correct length, and the logs are then split or 'cleft'¹ with an axe into three or four pieces which have to be shaped and trimmed ready for the lathe. The lathe is home-made, being entirely of wood, except for the iron spikes which hold the chair-leg in place, and the nails. The string is fastened to the unfixed end of a flexible pole above, passed several times round the chair-leg which is fixed horizontally at a convenient height for the cutting tool in the turner's hand, and fastened below to a treadle, the revolutions of the chair-leg being caused by the pressing down of the treadle and in the reverse direction by the spring of the pole when pressure on the treadle is released. The cutting is done only during the downward pressure of the treadle. The lathe works on the same principle as that of the bowl-turner on Turners Green² but is considerably lighter and can easily be moved and fitted up where required. The pole is fifteen feet long, its thick end being fixed, generally near the floor, to a structure of timber sunk in the ground.

Beech chair-legs are used for Windsor and other inexpensive chairs which are made in and near Wycombe. Although the pole lathe, except for the extreme simplicity and ease of its construction, has no apparent advantage over a more elaborate machine, the chair-legs made in the villages are much sought after for their superior quality, no less than for their comparative cheapness. This superiority is due to the hand-cleaving, which ensures that the legs follow the grain of the wood. It is the practice in the factories to saw the logs lengthways into pieces for the lathes, and in consequence the logs are frequently cross-grained and apt to split diagonally, or to break off at a knot which the bench-saw goes through, whereas the axe would have detected it and the faulty leg would have been discarded.³ Unfortunately, owing to the practice of covering woodwork with stain and varnish which hides not only the grain of the wood but many a flaw, the public cannot tell the difference between a faulty cross-grained leg and a straight one, and therefore the manufacturers do not offer

¹ Cf. the word 'cliff' for the tool which splits osier rods into 'skein'.

² See Bowl-turning, pp. 112-114.

³ The same applies to fencing, which, now that wood is sawn at the mills, is not nearly so strong and durable as when wood was rent or cleft

a better price for the hand-cleft legs in spite of acknowledging their superiority. Turners are in some cases installing a small engine which can work both a saw and a lathe. It was said that the hand-cleaving was so slow a process compared with the turning on a power lathe that it would not be worth while for a single-handed man to introduce power, since his engine would be idle for a large part of his working hours. But where two or three men are working, engines are being put in and there is a tendency for the turners to become chair-manufacturers on a small scale. It would be a pity if the hand-cleaving were given up, for the turners have had, until the recent boom, to meet competition of large consignments of chair-legs from abroad, and consequently the demand for their work depends partly on its superior quality. The demand fluctuates and they have often had no choice but to sell at the manufacturer's price or return home with their load unsold. A better way would be for the firms which they supply to advertise a stronger and better type of chair, with legs guaranteed as hand-cleft, which if well designed should command a better price because of superior quality.

The necessity for organization amongst the turners is admitted by manufacturers. A Stokenchurch manufacturer described pre-war conditions as 'slavery', and when this investigation was begun during the War, the few old men still at work said that there were then only about a sixth of the number formerly engaged in the trade, that young men would not learn it and no young man would come back to it. Their prophecy has not altogether been fulfilled. It is true that the young men usually prefer to bicycle to work in factories where they are within easy reach, and where the earnings, it is said, often amount to £4 a week, but there are a certain number who have returned from the war to home workshops and are at present doing well.

Turners vary greatly in efficiency, and in considering the earnings the great difference of skill must be borne in mind. Low weekly earnings mean in some cases that the worker is after being cross-sawn in the saw-pits. A further disadvantage of the modern method of hauling timber from the woods is the damage caused by great ruts, which did not occur when the timber was worked up into comparatively light articles in the woods. There is said to be a dislike now of allowing turners to work in the woods, owing to their propensity for having a share of the shooting. They are reputed less honest, or bolder, than their fathers.

unsuitable and not that the piece-rates are too low. A boy is often set to pick up his father's trade, not because of any special aptitude, but because the father wants assistance. Proficiency and swiftness in turnery depend largely on a knack in handling the tools in such a way that they do not get blunted too quickly, and in sharpening them properly as required. It was said in Wycombe, however, that some of the best workers came from the adjacent villages where earnings have been deplorably low.

The following facts are given to illustrate conditions in a village before the War. One man used to employ four workers turning chair-legs at 5s. a gross, and it took a man from seven in the morning to seven at night and a half-day on Saturday to make three gross in the week. A former employee in this shop stated that for 21 years he never brought home more than 12s. a week, though he worked longer hours than farm labourers. In addition, the turners had to find their own tools. Another turner remembered whole families working at it and said that no young man, i.e. who had to support a family, could live on the earnings of the trade. Chair-legs, which used to be sold for 9s. and 10s. a gross, are now sold for 25s. By 1919 piece-rates had risen to 13s. a gross and in 1920 14s. a gross was given; that is to say a man making three gross a week would earn £1 19s. 0d. or £2 2s. 0d. The following figures were given by an employer visited in 1920 :

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s.	d.
25 feet small beech bought by auction	1	15	0
Carting	1	0	0
Making 4 gross legs at 14s.	2	16	0
Carriage of legs at 1s. 6d. a gross	6	0	
	<hr/>		
	5	17	0

RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
To 4 gross chair-legs at 34s.	6	16	0

It is seldom that as many as four gross of legs can be got out of a 'load', i.e. 25 feet of beech. The cost of felling is not included, and this is sometimes borne wholly by the purchaser, sometimes half is paid by the vendor. The price of beech before decontrol was £2 1s. 3d. per load.

A 'gross' may mean a gross of legs and half a gross of

spars or 'stretchers' or a gross of legs and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a gross of stretchers, according to the type of chair. Some have only the front legs turned and the others cut by the bench saw; others have all turned and three stretchers.

In the districts visited, chair-leg turnery was usually a whole-time industry, but this is not always the case, and it seems that it used to alternate with seasonal work on the farms. In some fruit districts turners go 'fruiting' and carry on their trade at other times.

Prospects. Even now, the earnings of chair-leg turners are small compared with earnings in the factories, and unless these turners can be enabled to find a better market on the strength of the superiority of hand-cleft legs and can get favourable terms for material owing to very close proximity to the woods where young trees are thinned out or older ones felled, there does not seem much chance of survival. But there are several examples of small chair factories being developed in villages, and it would be worth while to encourage these enterprising craftsmen to turn out articles of better and distinctive design and to help them to place their products in the right market. And considering the great difference in the cost of conveying timber even a short distance, the haulage being often half as much as the price of the material, and of carrying compact bundles of chair-legs, it would be well to consider the erection of sheds right in the woods.¹

As with other wood industries there is a quantity of waste in a turner's shop which could quite well be worked up on his lathe for toys or for spars of cots and nursery furniture, as is sometimes done in a factory. Assistance both in design and in getting in touch with a market would be necessary for this.

Chair manufacture at Stokenchurch

The chair manufacture of Stokenchurch is of interest in an inquiry into rural industries in giving an example of remarkable industrial development in a village with no particular facilities except its situation in the heart of the woods which supply the material. Owing to the excessive felling of timber during the War, this village now has to carry some of its timber a considerable distance, but the small manufacturers have made the most of the boom in

¹ Probably where this is done, the turners purchase the uncut timber as it stands.

trade, and also taken advantage of the labour troubles at Wycombe to build up a connexion while the Wycombe works were idle.

Stokenchurch is situated on the high plateau of the South Chilterns, seven miles west of High Wycombe, three miles up a steep hill from a branch railway line and away from a good water-supply. The industry here is said to be older than at Wycombe, manufacturers evidently having moved to where coal was obtainable. Possibly owing to the difference of climate, which is striking, there is far more energy and enterprise here than in the low-lying villages of the Thame valley below. Work is said to be more skilled and earnings of turners higher. There are six chair-turners who send legs into Wycombe as the turners in other villages do. There are also about a dozen workshops where 'chair stuff' or parts of chairs are made, and a good deal of this is sent direct to towns in the north of England. There are seven chair factories and five saw-mills. Only one tractor is in use for haulage, and this is inadequate. In the factories steam-driven lathes and other machines have replaced the hand appliances almost entirely. The number of employees is about 250 men and 12 women, and there are about 50 women outworkers engaged in caning and rushing. The employers have for the most part risen from the ranks of the workers, and several workshops are run by separate families, the women as well as the men sharing in the work. As these are often under-capitalized the system leads to serious undercutting of prices, for it often happens that the stock must be sold at any price to provide for the family's needs. There is a South Bucks Timber Merchants' Association, but employees are slow to co-operate. It is said, however, that circumstances will soon force them to do so, the strongest factor being the organization of the workers which is being instigated from Wycombe. The workers benefit by the organization at Wycombe, for they work under the conditions now in force there. They have a 48-hour week and no Saturday work.

There is a market for parts and for chairs in the north of England. Chair factories in Lancashire are offshoots of the Wycombe industry. It was found better to make up the chairs near the market and to send parts by rail, the finished articles being liable to serious damage in transit. Chair-legs and parts are also made in Wales.

The question of time versus piece rates is a vexed one

owing to the great variation in the capacity of the workers.
The following time rates prevail (June 1920) :

Circular and band sawyers	1s. 7d., 1s. 8d., 1s. 9d. per hour
Sawyer's mates	1s. 2d., 1s. 4d. " "
Yardmen	1s. 2d., 1s. 3d. " "
Chair framers	1s. 7d., 1s. 8d. " "

The weekly earnings of piece-workers vary greatly, but £3 may be taken as a minimum. Many of the 'chair stuff' makers work by time and are paid from 1s. 4d. to 2s. an hour. Women usually work at home, caning and 'matting' i. e. rushing chair seats. The cane seats are mostly the same size and the workers are paid 6d. per seat as compared with 2d. in pre-war days. Rushing, which is more difficult and dirty work, varies from 9d. to 1s. a seat as compared with 3½d. to 6d. before the War. It takes a quick worker rather more than an hour to cane a chair, and not many years ago 1d. a chair was given. A few chair-caners are still to be found in other villages. They supply their own cane, and the cane now obtainable is poor in quality and almost prohibitive in price. This industry is no exception to other rural industries in the low earnings of the women as compared with the increased rates now obtainable by men. Women, however, are accepted in the same union (Furnishing Trades) with men and there is no reason why conditions should not improve. There was at the time of investigation no Industrial Council or Interim Reconstruction Committee in the Furnishing Trades.

With regard to the material, the following quotation is taken from the letter of a resident who supplied most of the foregoing information : 'As far as I can learn there is no science applied in the growing of beech locally. The timber merchants object to using planted beech for some reason, so that the beech nuts are allowed to germinate naturally.' Some planting, however, has been done recently. 'The woodmen cut ivy if it grows *on* the trees, and often cut down trees infected with "white disease", leaving them in the wood as they fall, which is not a very drastic remedy. It is very surprising to find so little attention given to the culture of beech in a district whose very existence depends on marketable timber. Felling of course goes on in the autumn and winter. Trees are marked in lots and sold by auction per lot. A load is 25 cubic feet (a one-horse load) but the number of loads per lot varies considerably,

and a great deal depends on the condition of the timber in a given area. I believe it is usual to thin out saleable timber in rotation once in seven years. The time of growth varies because of aspect, and some timber merchants use stuff fairly small. There is a danger lest in thinning the woods and felling timber, other trees should be injured at the top and branch out. This causes knots to occur. Injury is almost inevitable where trees of all ages are together. The small trees when thinned out are bought by the chair-leg turners. They do not have to pay the whole sum at once ; in some cases they fetch the timber as they want it and pay as they fetch it.

The Chiltern woods are not felled and replanted, but are thinned out in rotation usually every seven years, to allow light and air to reach the growing trees. Free growth is important, and used to be greatly assisted by grubbing up old stumps. This helped to cultivate the soil for the beech mast, and got rid of the harbourage which rotting wood affords to pests. It is said that woodmen will not do it now. It is hard work, and machinery such as the 'jack' used for lifting osier stools would be too heavy to be practical.

The wood is usually sold by auction, sometimes by tender. Difficulty was found many years ago in getting the money from buyers, therefore the bulk of the business was put into the hands of auctioneers. It is not realized by the turners, for whom the price of wood has doubled, how heavy the landlord's expenses have become, in taxation as well as in labour.

The woodlands give employment to a number of woodmen who have generally been paid the agricultural wage with a cottage rent free and firewood, and piece rates for felling. The average rate per load of 25 cubic feet was 1s. in 1914 and has risen to 2s. 6d. or 3s. Sometimes woodmen are also keepers, or they are employed on the estate in thatching, repairing fences, and odd jobs, and in harvesting according to the season. They are also employed in tying up 'fagots', the local name for loose heaps of 'tops', being twigs and pieces too small for turnery. There is at the present time great difficulty in disposing of these for firewood, because the woodmen are asking piece rates for tying up bundles which will bring them earnings equivalent to what they can get for felling, although it is not hard work. Thus, in spite of the need for fuel, prices are prohibitive. It

would seem worth while to employ women or girls for this. The value of the fagots, or heaps of tops, is included in the estimate on which the timber is put up to auction.¹ This is made by a woodman on the estate ; after sale, the lots are valued and payment made accordingly.

Prospects. There was much criticism both in Wycombe and in Stokenchurch of the system of rapid massed production of a very poor quality which is carried on in many of the factories. It is considered uneconomic, and it was thought that the boom was already beyond its height. The discontent prevalent in Wycombe is attributed to many of the workers being engaged on scamped and hurried work in which they can find no satisfaction, and that this kind of production is demoralizing. No thorough investigation was made in Wycombe, but the class of work varies greatly, and this criticism does not apply throughout, some of the work being of high reputation. In Stokenchurch the chief products are the cheaper sorts of Windsor and bedroom chairs. Some employers realize the urgency of improving the quality of the production, yet little attention is given to design. It was noticed in many instances that manufacturers are intent upon copying each other's models and grabbing one another's market, or reproducing old styles, and that it seldom occurs to them to attempt to forestall the public demand by producing something original related to a real need. For instance, many workers in Wycombe are engaged on elaborate processes of staining and French polishing for ' Jacobean ' reproduction. Good solid chairs could be produced with a great reduction in the labour and sold at a reasonable price if more attention were paid to the need for strength and comfort and less to unnecessary decoration. If some of the firms which now turn out quantities of flimsy kitchen and bedroom chairs were to concentrate on good quality in material and workmanship, there would be a far better chance for steady development. It seemed that the market for the staple products was likely to be glutted before long.

The chief needs in Stokenchurch itself are for transport and for a water-supply. A scheme for the latter is now being considered, and the question of a light railway has long been

¹ Local dealers are said to have made large profits out of buyers for the government, who knew little of the value of timber. The traditional yard of this neighbourhood is 37 inches ; by re-measuring with a yard of 36 inches, extra profit can be made.

under discussion. Some employers believe that this would pay. But the hills would make it extremely expensive, and a development of lorry traffic appears more likely.

While there is some attempt in Stokenchurch to utilize waste in making up small articles, there is scope for a well managed toy industry in connexion with the chair factories which would give employment to girls. The bodies, legs, and stands of children's wooden horses are made here. They go elsewhere, as brushwood goes to brush factories, to have their manes and tails and coloured stripes added. Their shape is none the less acceptable to children because it is suggested by the machinery for chair legs and broom-heads. In Chesham, where there are many brushwood factories, wooden spades and other toys are made from the waste; but here too there are pieces left over, of suitable shapes for an ingenious toy-maker to fashion, while wooden toy-makers find it difficult to obtain material for their needs. The neighbourhood of chair and brushwood works are obviously favourable to toy-making.

Here it may be remarked that many of the English toys fail because they are made for grown-up people rather than for children. The feeling is to a child as important as the appearance, and the firmness and roundness of a turned article is better than the flat sharpness of fret-work. More attention should be paid to the machinery for 'roughing out' toys which can be finished by hand. Too much hand work puts the toys beyond the means of most parents, and children do not want their toys to be too precious. An artist who is extremely successful in making painted toys, owing to her imaginative designs and practical workmanship, explained that much of the hand work is so mechanical that it would lose nothing in being done by machine, while the worker would gain much by being relieved of the drudgery. More attention should be paid to the possibilities of the small-power engine combined with handicraft. There is a great deal of work for the art schools in teaching practical design in relation to trade demands, and special study of possibilities for rural wood industries might do much to encourage good production. The other great need in a woodland area is for a organization for marketing the products and for keeping producers in touch with the needs of the market.

Other Turnery

A Bowl Turner. On Bucklebury Common, not two miles from Thatcham, turnery may still be seen in a very primitive form. For generations the family of Lailey here and at Chieveley have been bowl turners, and at Wellhouse there was a group of bowl turners a generation ago.¹ It is to be feared that the industry will die out and nothing be left but the name of Turners Green, for George Lailey is the only turner left who makes elm bowls and he cannot get a younger man to help him. When first visited his mother was helping him to saw blocks of elm wood for the bowls, but as a rule he now gets this done at a saw-mill.

Material. Logs are cut so that the round side shall form the outside of the biggest bowl which is roughly hacked into shape with an axe, and then the inside is scooped out on his lathe in one piece. A succession of bowls are thus cut from one block, one inside another, with hardly any waste. Even the small piece in the centre will make a peg-top. Bowls, he said, are turned from poplar wood in the North, but they are shallower, and all the material inside a bowl is wasted. Owing to the economy in timber of Lailey's method, he has had large Government orders for bowls used as ladles in munition works. While still under army age he was exempted as indispensable.

Trade. He is now (November 1919) too busy on a Government contract to undertake private orders, and much regrets being single-handed. He has a pony-cart and has to fetch his timber and take his bowls to the station. He sells to Harrods, the Army and Navy Stores, Whiteley's, and to private customers. Trade is good, and though he has raised his prices, the buyer at a London shop said he could get a better price if he asked for it. Apart from the usefulness of these bowls for washing up silver, many people preferring them to enamel because there is no fear of scratching, their beauty and durability would ensure their popularity amongst people interested in handicraft, and the buyer agreed that a shop which specialized in such things would be more suitable than general stores. The work on the bigger bowls is very strenuous, for the tool which cuts them on the lathe has to be pressed against the body to keep it in position while the bowl revolves. It was stated that engineers have often been to see whether machinery could be used, but so far without success, because all

¹ See Lawrence, *The Country Home*.

other methods would grind the whole of the interior to waste.

The Craftsman. This bowl turner is an example of the craftsmen who do not reckon values merely in pounds, shillings, and pence, and though in many cases loyalty to other workmen makes them careful not to undercut prices, tradition is so strong in them that it almost goes against conscience to charge more than the customary prices of their predecessors. Lailey is said to be doing well, but he has his holding and his common rights, and no wife or family to support. In cases like this, a Handicrafts Association can do valuable work by making the craftsman known to people who are willing to pay for art and workmanship. He can turn about four dozen bowls a day, or, with sawing and chopping, about twelve dozen a week. The price varies according to size—from 3s. to 3d. A brother-in-law, who had been gassed, tried to help him for a time but could not learn, and found it too hard work. Making the smaller sizes, however, is not hard work, and it is quite possible that by getting a better price he could induce a younger man to take it up. He also makes platters and candlesticks.

The Pole Lathe. One of the two lathes in his workshop has been in use for over a hundred years. The ‘mandrill’, to which the wood for the bowls is fixed, is made to revolve by means of a treadle and a flexible pole, fixed at one end. From the loose end, near the roof of the shed, a leather strap passes downwards round the mandrill, and again downwards to the treadle to which it is fixed. In pressing down the treadle, the mandrill revolves, and the pole is bent downwards; in releasing it, the pole springs up again to its natural position, turning the mandrill in the reverse direction. The turner stands in a pit, working the treadle and grasping the tool which cuts the bowl as it revolves. A pole lathe could easily be constructed by boys in a workshop, and bowl turning would be an interesting addition to the curriculum in a woodwork class. Sometimes a pole will last as long as ten years. The tools are simple, that chiefly in use consisting mainly of a long, narrow piece of bent iron, tipped with steel, which must be kept sharp, fixed in a wooden handle.¹

¹ The beauty of the country where this unique craft is carried on cannot be forgotten. Bucklebury Common stretches for three miles along the top of a ridge, and the scattered homesteads of the commoners seem to grow out of the dells and dips of its surface no less than the woods which run down the gullies and cover the bottoms on either

Other Turneries. No other turners have been found in villages except the chair-leg turners of the Thame and Chiltern district and the few underwood turners, though occasionally a carpenter has a lathe. There are turners for cabinet-makers and builders at Oxford, Reading, and Banbury. As a rule, there is not enough turnery for a single builder or carpenter to keep a lathe and a turner constantly occupied. In Oxford there is only one turner whose son is helping him, and it was said that there is room for another good one. At Reading a man was doing well in a miscellaneous trade, mostly for furniture makers. Repairs are sent by furniture shops to the turners. This man had worked as a journeyman, and not being satisfied with the pay, set up for himself. He has three or four lathes worked by gas power. At Banbury, besides the turners employed in furniture works, a turner is at work on a primitive lathe to which his father was apprenticed about 1840 at Brackley. He is an excellent craftsman, intensely interested in his craft, who likes to work out his own designs. He is also a good carpenter, carver, inlayer, and French polisher. He 'does up' antique furniture for dealers. He is an example of the men who easily become the prey of the dealers, and in spite of the great demand for old furniture are scantily paid for their highly skilled work and artistic talent. He turns anything on his small lathe, from a wagon-wheel hub to a minute chessman, in a dark cottage room, crowded with bits of furniture and woodwork.

Some means ought to be found for registering these original and talented craftsmen, and putting them into touch with associations for the crafts, which might have local branches and dépôts linked up to their central dépôts.

It is not uncommon for village blacksmiths and carpenters whose main work tends to be confined more and more to repairs, to do good original and decorative work, and there

hand. In May the common is ablaze with gorse. Dark clumps of fir stand tall above this stretch of gold. The orchards are white with blossom, and in the woods, rich dark faggots lie in a sea of bluebells. Here and there a woodman is seen sorting the stakes and trimming them with a sickle. His rhythmic movements as he works up the line of faggots add to the beauty of the scene. Not only in the radiance of spring is this country beautiful. We may contrast the environment of these woodland crafts with any industrial surroundings, and ask whether they are not worth preserving as a national tradition which may yet be a source of inspiration to workers.

is a need for better organization to bring rural craftsmen into touch with one another and with purchasers, and to open the way for mutual instruction and encouragement between craftsmen in town and country alike.

Other Wood Industries

In saw-mills dealing with local timber, it is not unusual to find that wheels, wheelbarrows and other articles are made on the spot. In many saw-mills the only manufacture is that of nail boxes for iron works as a means of using waste. This is an easy way of disposing of it, for it is unskilled work, and is done by boys and girls with automatic machinery for the sawing, but it bears a very small profit as there is much competition. In others toys are made. The difficulty lies in teaching the boys and girls who are employed, and very little is attempted in this way. In some temporary saw-mills set up to deal with a surplus of timber felled for war purposes, girls were being employed in making boxes and fire-lighters. It was said that girls employed at bench saws got on well because the noise prevented talking ; if they were painting they had to be put far apart. It was also said that they were not usually satisfactory on a process which required skill in the adjustment of the machinery, though they did well on automatic work. At Inkpen an interesting business has been built up close to the woods. The shortage of houses, and scarcity and expense of lodgings made expansion difficult, and this firm would welcome some means of transport for labour from surrounding villages. This would be costly if borne by a single firm alone.

Considerable attention was being given to methods of dealing with the quantities of sawdust accumulating in the woods. Some firms had made fire-lighters, but doubt was expressed as to the market for these. Engines are being advertised which will consume all ' offal ', and some of the engines used locally have furnaces which will burn sawdust. In most cases the fuel for the engines is the waste wood which accumulates in a saw-mill. In some cases valuable timber is being used as firewood which could be utilized in a by-industry.

It is difficult in the uncertainty of the market to-day to get any clear opinion as to the prospects in wooden by-industries.¹

¹ See Part I, chap. 3, pp. 45, 48, for Village Wheelwrights and Carpenters.

CHAPTER II

OSIER CULTIVATION AND WILLOW BASKET-MAKING

(a) Osier Beds in Berks. and Oxon.

ALTHOUGH the survey is in no sense complete, the following facts, collected in the spring of 1918, may be of use for comparison with the conditions in other districts. No books are kept, but the figures given appear, by comparison with the extracts given below from other sources, to be approximately correct.

Description of Beds

The most extensive, with an area of about 150 acres, not all lying together, are near Newbury. The Faringdon beds are worked by basket-makers who have moved to Wallingford. In two cases, sewage works have been found planted with osiers, one of them seventeen years ago. At Chinnor, beds have been given up in favour of keeping ducks, but one grower stated that the two industries could be combined if the ducks were kept off the beds during the two months of sprouting. Farmers own beds, or have waste places or hedgerows planted with osiers, and sell the rods standing to the local growers and sometimes to the merchants. Large quantities used to be brought in this way to Oxford and distributed over the country. The opinion of the basket-makers is unanimous as to the neglect and consequent poor quality of these rods. They explain that the art is not understood, the wrong kinds are planted, set too thinly and in too swampy ground. Some allotment holders plant their plots with osiers and consider it profitable to do so. The Kennet beds have suffered greatly by the bursting of the river bank; a considerable amount of produce has been wasted owing to the heavy floods preventing the cutting until too late. Contrary to the practice of the old-fashioned growers, osiers are grown very successfully away from streams where the soil is heavy enough to hold moisture; the soil being less swampy makes it easier to work. Further, rods grown in swamps are apt to be too pithy, and to become riddled with worm. This was said to be the drawback of

West-country rods ; midland rods were better, but Grantham rods, with artificial irrigation, the best. The Lavingdon grower stated that the small Berkshire beds were so neglected as to be difficult to clear and that it would be advisable to plant new sets on new ground.

Foreign Sources

Rods and osiers are imported from Holland, Belgium, France, and the West Indies. The French excel in the cultivation of the light osiers for fine work. It is specially important that they should be fine, smooth, and straight.

Markets

Osiers were bought up by the Government during the war for shell-cases. The one large grower in the district sells mostly to a big London firm ; lately he has also sold to St. Dunstan's, and smaller quantities in Cornwall and in other parts of the country ; a Leicester firm is now buying up rods in this neighbourhood. The grower's price to local basket-makers was stated to be £1 a bolt. The usual method is to sell per 80 bolts ; the weight varies, but roughly averages a ton. He had been selling at £56 a ton, 4 sizes mixed, and found on calculation that this was equivalent to £75 or £80 a ton for the best sorts. He sells them ready-peeled for the most part.

Labour

The same grower employs about twenty men, the labour being fairly constant through the year. He also keeps a farm on which the men do a certain amount of work. The slackest times on the beds are August and September ; thus labour is set free for the harvest. The labour required is estimated at one man to ten acres by two growers in Berkshire. It may be noted in this connexion that this is a woodland district where there is a good deal of varied labour. The labour question is acute, and the difficulties are partly attributed to the lack of houses, but more generally to the upheaval of the labour market by the wages given to both sexes for government work regardless of skill and of what the particular industry can support. Employers state that they can afford to pay wages for work on a Government contract which they cannot afford on a commercial one. The sorting, which is skilled work, is done by women ; the peeling is usually done by women and children.

Wages

All are paid by piece-rates. The employer interviewed stated that before the war a good man could earn 35s. a week, and about £2 10s. Od. now ; an exceptionally clever man had earned £2 10s. Od. before the war and was earning about £5 now. Other growers reckoned the earnings as about £2 now. Peeling is now 3d. a bundle ; a quick worker can do three in an hour. Cutting is about 5d. to 6d. a bolt (6 bundles). The old-fashioned basket-makers used to employ children to peel with a knife instead of the peelers' tool ; they cannot now get this labour, the pay apparently being no longer any inducement while women can secure good wages elsewhere. A good sorter, a woman, could earn about £1 a week working short time (about 10 to 4).

Prices

Selling prices were said by the local basket-makers to have advanced 500 per cent. One man quoted an advance from £25 before the war to £120 now.

Prospects

These prices were admitted as sufficient to support the above wages, but growers expect a fall. The largest grower looked to the expansion of his farm when prices should fall. The question of machinery arouses interest and is dealt with in Ellmore's book,¹ but at present the beds in this district are too swampy for its use. It may here be noted that an engineer in this locality had been approached as to the purchase of a government tractor, but had declined, and the Newbury engineer who had bought it was expected by a progressive farmer to lose on the transaction owing to the long period of idleness during the wet spring. A small grower in the same place who had, contrary to the advice of the local growers, planted away from the water with excellent results, was speculating as to the development of small ploughs and of machinery for small holdings and osier beds. He preferred to cultivate a small bed single-handed with occasional help from one man than to go to the trouble of employing labour.

Retailers expect a fall in prices and give warning that at one time there was a slump in osiers.

¹ *The Cultivation of Osiers and Willows*, by W. P. Ellmore, Dent, 1919.

Estimated cost of planting new beds

A purely speculative estimate was given of the cost per acre of planting 150 acres :

	£
An acre would cost £24 to dig at 3s. a pole. (In the present state of the labour market men would not dig at any price)	24
22,000 sets (best rods) at 10s. per 1,000	11
Levelling and planting	6
	<u>41</u>

The following extract from Mr. Ellmore's book shows the approximate cost of osier-growing per acre :

<i>First Year.</i>	<i>Pre-war.</i>	<i>1918.</i>
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Ploughing old turf per acre	4 0 0	4 15 0
19,360 cuttings, with carriage and packing	15 0 0	19 10 0
Planting if let by piece	1 5 0	1 10 0
First year hoeing four times	2 10 0	3 10 0
Rent and rates	1 15 0	1 15 0
Cutting and carrying off	1 0 0	1 5 0
Interest on outlay	1 5 0	1 12 0
	<u>26 15 0</u>	<u>33 17 0</u>

<i>Second Year.</i>		
Rent and rates	1 15 0	1 15 0
Hoeing four times	2 10 0	3 10 0
Cutting and carrying off at 7s. 6d. and 10s. a ton	1 10 0	2 0 0
Incidentals of filling in plants that failed	15 0	17 6
5 per cent. interest on first year's outlay	1 5 0	1 12 0
	<u>7 15 0</u>	<u>9 14 6</u>

<i>Third Year.</i>		
Rent and rates	1 15 0	1 15 0
Hoeing three times	1 10 0	2 12 6
Cutting and carrying off	2 5 0	3 0 0
Incidentals of filling in &c.	10 0	12 6
5 per cent. on first year's outlay	1 5 0	1 12 0
	<u>7 5 0</u>	<u>9 12 0</u>

Net cash results as shown thus work out as follows, taking present-day figures 1917-18 as a basis for calculation :

	<i>Expenditure.</i>	<i>Receipts.</i>
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
First Year	33 17 0	8 5 0
Second "	9 14 0	32 0 0
Third "	9 12 0	56 0 0
	<u>53 3 0</u>	<u>96 5 0</u>

OSIER CULTIVATION

*Extract from Encyclopaedia of Agriculture. Green & Sons.
1908. Report on an island between Kew and Richmond
taken from the Quarterly Journal of Forestry for April.
1907.*

Expenditure.	Receipts.
	£ s. d.
Rent	15 0 0
Rates and taxes . .	1 0 0
Cutting bolts at 6s. a score . .	22 10 0
Sorting 750 bolts at 15s. a score . .	9 7 6
Peeling 560 bolts at 10d. a bolt . .	23 6 8
Making 5,000 baskets at 7½d. each . .	156 5 0
Planting 5,000 cuttings at 2s. 6d. per 1,000 .	12 6
Weeding	5 0 0
Trenching	3 8 4
	<hr/>
	236 10 0
	Net profit . .
	100 0 0

The land in question was about $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres, rented at £15. When taken over in 1900 it was planted with old stools, but since then planted with about 30,000 cuttings.

A crop grown at Mount Sorrel, Leicestershire, which turned off 7 tons to the acre realized £8 per ton in 1918 when cut and bundled as grown.

(b) Basket-Making

District Investigated.

Within a radius of about 25 miles of Oxford the following basket-makers have been visited, and except for one or two men working for retail shops the list is believed to be exhaustive :

1 at Caversham	1 at Cholsey
1 „ Twyford	1 „ Wantage
3 „ Reading	1 „ Eynsham
2 „ Inkpen	1 „ Chipping Norton
1 „ Midgham	1 „ Chipping Campden
1 „ Thame	1 „ Oxford
1 „ Wallingford	1 „ Banbury

also the following retail shops which keep or kept before the war one or two basket-makers at work either on the premises

or in their own homes, in this case generally buying all they could make :

- 3 at Oxford (one the Blind Dépôt ; one an ironmongery company ; one a basket and rope shop).
- 2 „ Newbury.
- 2 „ Reading.

It will be seen that the industry is carried on by the riverside of the Thames and its tributaries. The most thriving makers are those who still have access to local rods ; if they do not actually lease beds of their own it is the custom to buy the rods standing and to cut them themselves as a rule. The most thriving also have retail shops of their own, though in four cases (at Oxford, Wallingford, Thame, and Chipping Campden) they have a wider connexion as well. Before attempting to classify local makers, it is advisable to give a brief account of the national organization of the industry, for nowhere within the investigated area is the industry at present conducted on a large scale, eight being the greatest number quoted as employed in one workshop (at Oxford) before the war, though several would take on more men if they could get them and the material.

Trade Organization and Description of Local Firms

Although there are large workshops where over a hundred are employed, the industry keeps, owing to the absence of machinery, to the somewhat primitive type in which an apprentice can, if he have the opportunity, become a master man. The small employer at any rate is a man who has served his apprenticeship, and has worked and usually still works on his plank ; he usually also has a knowledge of osier cultivation, though where work is done on a large scale, osier cultivators, basket-makers, retailers, and sometimes wholesale merchants form as a rule separate businesses. In Liverpool, London, and Birmingham, there are firms which carry on both basket-making and wholesale dealing in rods. Since basket-making is an industry which requires little capital it is common for journeymen to set up for themselves. In the towns, these men get their osiers from the big firms to whom they undertake to sell their products ; they dare not sell in the open market lest they should be boycotted for material. Frequently they fail, and 'go back on to the plank', that is, once more become journeymen. They are called 'garret' men and

this system is disapproved of by the trade organizations as conducive to undercutting of prices. A good workman setting up in a town will be taken on again if he fails, but in the country failure is more disastrous, because there are not the same chances of starting again, and notoriety, either for good or evil, is more easily won. Rural basket-makers are also dependent on big firms for their supply of osiers, at any rate in this district where the small local beds are almost useless. They benefit by their connexion with the big firms by being able to procure kinds of baskets which they cannot make ; many a small shop is supplied in this way, and a basket-maker becomes a retailer ; occasionally he gives up making and becomes a retailer only.

It is possible to classify the local makers roughly into the following groups :

(1) Those who make for local farmers, &c. only, taking their wares round to the farms and coal merchants, or who work mostly or entirely for a retail shop in the market town. Of these there are two old men in a village where there used to be osier beds ; three brothers who have to pay 30s. a load for the carriage of rods from Guildford and Shrivenham &c. and drive a cart to all the farms within 30 miles ; a clever and original odd-jobber who started two or three years ago having taught himself, and does wooding and allotment cultivation, &c., in his spare time, has lately taken on an allotment in very bad condition at a rental of 6s., planted with osiers, which he hopes will yield him some material until he can plant and get a return. He sells mostly to coal merchants on the Oxford station. He has recently married and is hopeful of being able to make his way. His case is unique in this district, all the others having been duly apprenticed or having learnt from their fathers. (He picked up carpentry in the same way, making his own tools, and makes mechanical toys of old watches.) The three brothers mentioned above have all been in the Army, but prefer independence and small earnings by continuing their father's connexion to better pay elsewhere. They have relations in the trade at Worcester. They own a few osiers, having land of their own, the rest they buy by the acre from the farmers, &c., and cut themselves. They could not afford to employ labour at the present rates, as it would cost them double what it would produce, though they or their father used to employ a man from time to time, probably of the vagrant class. Of those working for retailers, one is blind, in Oxford, another at Inkpen prefers the regularity and

saving of trouble in spite of lower prices. (For coal baskets retailed at 2*s.* 6*d.* he received 1*s.* 10*d.*)

(2) Those who follow a second calling; e.g., three were publicans and preferred the second calling—two having entirely given up basket-making—one of whom at Abingdon admitted that there was a very good opening now in the place, and was going to assist the newly established ex-soldier, trained at St. Dunstan's with advice as to marketing. All agree that basket-making has been very badly paid, that they have had to work long hours to make a living, and several have compared the earnings unfavourably to the agricultural wage, assigning the cause generally to the cheap, though generally inferior, foreign baskets. But from the evidence of the retailers, and of the more successful type of basket-maker to be described below, it appears that the poverty and depression of these men is partly due to lack of skill; instead of serving a thorough apprenticeship, they have picked up from their fathers possibly one kind of basket only, depression and insufficient livelihood have reacted on their work, and the decline of local osier-growing and lack of means to acquire land for beds of their own, has put them at a disadvantage. The price of small quantities of rods from a distance is prohibitive, and in this connexion it may be remarked that two London merchants who import largely, attributed the rural maker's poverty to this cause and strongly advocated the cultivation of local beds for local use. Also through sentiment, no less than through fear of losing old customers they have failed to raise their prices even in the war scarcity in ratio to the increased cost of material. Hence they use poor material and turn out poor work.

(3) A third type are those who own their retail shops and also own or lease beds. A comparison of this type with the others shows under what conditions basket-making can flourish in rural places. First, they have a shop where they can show good work to advantage. The Oxford, Thame, and Wallingford baskets are of striking quality. Secondly, they know the trade thoroughly and can turn their hands to all kinds of work, including chairs, side-cars, and original designs, undertaking domestic as well as agricultural work. In several cases their connexion has extended for some distance; one man said he had refused a good order from Covent Garden owing to lack of labour last year. Thirdly, even though they invariably have to supplement their own osiers by buying, if they can buy them standing they can

cut them properly. One of the best makers, also an osier-grower, stated that it paid him better to do the cutting, peeling, and making all himself (with his father, brother, and two journeymen) rather than employ women who were paid 3s. a day for peeling, because the men could do very much more in a day. As a rule peeling and sorting are piece-work. Fourthly, it is evident that the absence of imported rods has put the osier-grower, who is a capitalist, at an advantage over the small maker with no beds, especially since the Government has bought up large quantities of rods for shell-cases.

(4) One man belongs to a slightly different type, since he makes agricultural and fruit baskets only, chiefly for the Midland fruit growers ; he employs six men, and would take six more to start a school. He believes in keeping one man to one kind of work. Other rural employers state that this means slightly quicker work and therefore higher pay, and in agricultural work it tends to cheaper production, but for local markets the power of meeting all needs seems more important than the slight gain of time. Local masters at any rate are agreed that apprentices should learn the whole trade and then choose their own line. In the big firms, however, they receive instruction from a skilled workman who probably keeps to one class of work, though not entirely to a particular kind of basket.

Markets and Competition

In the Covent Garden market there is keen competition for baskets with Holland. The Dutch are said to have flooded the English market with rods some twenty-five years ago, with the result that the English beds were neglected. Then they ceased sending rods to England owing to an embargo on their export by the Dutch Government, but sent baskets instead. Covent Garden merchants own baskets which are sent down to the country fruit and vegetable growers to fill, because baskets owned by big merchants are more easily traced and less liable to get lost than if they are the property of a countryman. Whole fruit crops are sold by farmers to merchants who undertake the picking. A similar tendency is seen in Birmingham where fruit-dealers send baskets down to the Evesham district. Even in the Midlands competition in 'gardeners' baskets' from Holland is felt, in spite of the expense of overland carriage. Thus the stimulation of local osier production is recommended particularly by Midland basket-makers

who wish to keep the Midland markets for the English industry. Many Evesham growers, however, own their baskets. Owing to the tendency for baskets to be made where they will be sold, the trade is to some extent concentrated in certain big towns. Baskets are sold in large quantities to factories, shops, laundries, coal merchants, and for domestic use. Basket-work also includes the making of cane and wicker furniture of all kinds. Therefore with gardeners' baskets also bought in towns, the town market becomes more important than the rural one. There is no export trade in English baskets.

Organization of Employers and Employed

The Employers' Association came into existence some three years ago, since when each of the four associations affiliated to it have greatly increased their membership, and a fifth association for the West of England has been formed. The Midland makers appear to have been the moving spirits in organization. Nottingham is the chief Midland basket-making centre. The workers are organized in five unions, some of which are of old standing. In 1918 an Interim Industrial Council was formed, the working of which appears to give great satisfaction both to employers and employed.

Organization does not appear so far greatly to have affected the rural basket-makers, at any rate not directly. The most go-ahead men are considering whether to join the Midland Association and are likely to do so ; these are men returned from the army. One is awaiting information before establishing himself in his mother's business ; a man near the Evesham osier beds and fruit districts is an enthusiastic member of this association and spoke with great satisfaction of the Whitley Council. The better prospects in the towns, no doubt largely attributable to trade-union organization, have been drawing the more enterprising and skilled journeymen away from the country, leaving the local work to be done by a single-handed maker or by the members of a family, with occasional help from a vagrant labourer of a type who has cast discredit on the trade. Itinerant workers have, however, often been of a better type, receiving travelling money from their unions and moving according to the demand for work. One of the local masters was a travelling journeyman of this type before he bought his business. He now has two apprentices at work, one deaf and dumb, and the other with defective sight ; he has more work than he can do and would employ

two or three good journeymen if he could get them, or would take apprentices, male or female, if properly bound. He keeps no accounts, but by working long hours he appears to be making something over two pounds a week in spite of time he spends in taking his wares to the local markets by rail, and to the farm sales. His prices are very low ; he does not care to raise them to old customers. He does all kinds of work, designs baskets, and conceived the ingenious idea of reseating chairs with split osier when cane was scarce. He had bought so-called 'African' osiers from Liverpool at £70 a ton, paying heavily for the carriage. They were of excellent quality with little waste. He was in the habit of buying in Birmingham. Not being near beds, and not having much space, he prefers to buy ready-peeled for white work. The business was formerly owned by a man who used to keep twenty-three or four basket-makers in the district at work, including two at Oxford, who subsequently set up retail shops for themselves. This man was a merchant and used to sell baskets all over the country, mostly 'pots'. The rods were bought from a riverside merchant at Oxford.

The Demand for Labour

The shortage of labour is hampering the town and rural employers alike. The President of the Employers' Federation attributes the scarcity to the too stringent restrictions in the number of apprentices allowed by the unions per journeyman. Through the Industrial Council these regulations have recently been altered and more apprentices allowed. Where more than a hundred journeymen are employed there is no restriction. In the rural areas the shortage is put down to inadequate prices, cheap foreign baskets and low pay. A rural basket-maker, approached as to whether he would teach soldiers, said he had declined on the grounds that it would not be worth the soldier's while to learn. But the more enterprising type of master craftsman described above would gladly train more men (and in one case women) if he could get the material. In Oxford a rapid and skilful maker of chairs and all kinds of basket work asked to be mentioned as being willing to undertake to train thirty soldiers in basket-making and osier cultivation, and said that there was a good opening for a basket-factory in Oxford. He believes in training men for the whole industry, and was anxious to be approached by the Government in the matter. Two other good crafts-

men were willing to undertake training, but a warning was given by a prominent employer which shows that the trade-union regulation of apprenticeship is due to the fear of half-trained labour lowering the standard of the industry. The apprenticeship system, whereby the teacher profits financially according to the progress of his apprentice, is deemed to make for sound and thorough training. There is reason to hope, however, that the trade will not put serious obstacles in the way of the rural employer in this or in other matters, and in any case, the local cultivation of his material would tend to freedom as would the local market for his products.

The opinions of a good opening for a factory in Oxford was endorsed by a rod merchant, who stated that even before the War it existed, and by the retailers, one of whom keeps two basket-makers at work on the premises, the other kept one before the War, but it was doubtful whether it will pay him to do so again. Both mentioned the better quality and cheaper output of baskets made in a factory. Villages, however, are not suitable for basket factories owing to the great storage space required and the cost of carriage of so bulky a product. Three rural employers wanted more journeymen, however, and in residential quarters there is an increasing demand for general work, e.g., laundry baskets. Two London merchants, one of whom deals in rods and in agricultural baskets, the other doing a high-class trade in light goods, considered that the trade would stand considerable development both in male and female labour. One of these stated that he had no time to train any one, but that he was ready to employ many more trained workers, and that if a scheme were put forward to deal with this question he felt sure the trade would give it hearty support. Probably no better all-round instructor could be found than the rural master craftsman of the best type, who not only knows the commercial as well as the manufacturing side of the industry, but has an immense pride and interest in good work, both in the sound cultivation of willows and in all branches of willow work.

Women's Labour

The problem of sectional labour (i.e. men doing a part and women a part of the same article) which the trade unions do not at present allow, and of female labour in general, was discussed at a meeting of the Industrial Council for the trade, but no definite conclusion had been reached

by the autumn of 1919 with regard to dilution of labour. Opinion is divided on this matter; trade unionists do not altogether care for women working in the same shops as men, though dilution of labour would actually increase the men's earnings in some cases, where women can be put to the lighter work. The cheapness of foreign baskets is partly attributed to the more economical system of sectional and family labour abroad. One of the large London merchants spoke in favour of developing the cottage industry on foreign lines, but doubted the capacity of the people for this kind of work, considering the present waste of intellect in rural England as almost criminal. A certain amount of women's labour is being satisfactorily employed in Birmingham and Nottingham. In Oxford light work with the wands or thin ends of rods and with split rods was described as eminently suitable for women. In this connexion it is interesting to note the Eynsham baskets made from riverside rushes. These used to be made before the workmen's flag baskets came in from Spain, and, owing to the absence of these at the moment, there is a great demand for rush dinner or tool baskets; ladies' shopping and work-baskets also meet with a ready sale. The industry has extended to Yarnton, and through the Women's Institutes to other villages.

Wages

Basket-making is paid throughout by piece-rates. The highest wages quoted, and confirmed from another source, were £6 in a week in a large London factory for agricultural baskets. (The term 'gardeners' baskets' is used in the trade for these and fruit baskets, flats and pots, &c.). In Wallingford £4 to £5 was cited as the earnings of good eight-hour workmen where high-class goods were made in a town; for farmers' baskets alone this man did not think wages would be more than £2. Rural workers have failed to raise their prices even in the present shortage enough to meet the increased cost of making, and farmers are waiting to buy. A worker near Reading, where the price of baskets is low, had given up making them except in his spare time because he said he would have to work till eight or nine at night to make 35s. a week, and he considered himself a quick worker. The Oxford maker, a rapid worker, making chairs as well as baskets, stated his time to be worth £5 a week. The Wallingford man supposed he had earned £3 a week two or three years ago, before joining the Army,

but he explained that he was then only just establishing his shop and evidently expected to increase his business now that he was demobilized. His father owns beds at Faringdon where they work still for a few weeks from time to time, though they have moved to a better centre for their shop. The following figures are taken straight from the wage book of a rural basket-maker, making gardeners' baskets only :

Week ending March 15.

		£ s. d.
Able-bodied man	38 agr. baskets at 1s. 9d.	. 3 6 6
Delicate man	30 " "	. 2 12 6
1 man 13 months at trade	24 " "	. 2 2 0

The last had been a carpenter and painter but was no longer allowed to follow an out-door occupation. He would learn a skilled trade more easily than the ordinary apprentice.

Employers and independent makers in this district consider an eight hours' day very short and are in the habit of working much longer. The rod grower and basket-maker mentioned as working up his own business has occasionally worked from four in the morning till seven at night and did not mind doing so.

The earnings of blind men must be considered separately. Taken at random over a period of twelve months, the average wages of five men in a London factory were £3 6s. 0d.; £3 ; £2 10s. 10½d.; £2 8s. 0½d.; £2 6s. 8d. The prices asked for goods were somewhat in advance of other retail prices and the secretary said that at times there was a difficulty in getting a sufficient number of orders to keep the men employed up to their full capacity. In Oxford no difficulty is found in disposing of the work of two blind basket-makers. It was strongly felt that the civil blind should be on the same footing as regards pensions for disability as the ex-soldier, and satisfaction was expressed that the matter was under consideration by the Local Government Board. Blind institutions are well represented on the Employers' Associations for cane and willow work. The After-Care Committee at St. Dunstan's supplies to two proficient makers appliances which help them to keep the shape and size correct; these are simple, but the time for making is considerably lengthened by setting them. The blind do very good work, but in the finer branches the baskets have to be finished by a sighted man.¹

¹ The after-care work, in supplying materials, giving extra instruction, and encouraging blind workers when they return to the somewhat depressing atmosphere of ordinary life amongst 'sighted' people, is of great value.

Two well-established makers in the district had money to extend their business and were eager to do so. Both believed that the moment to capture foreign trade had come and both were agreed, though unknown to one another, that if the Government could act generously with regard to releasing men and stimulating osier cultivation, there was nothing to fear from foreign competition. But there is considerable difference of opinion on this point. A Nottingham firm which had suffered severe competition from Dutch workers who had come to England to learn and then beaten them in competition on their own ground, met the difficulty by changing their staple product to furniture—bath-chairs and spinal carriages, in which they now excel. It has been repeatedly stated in this area that basket-makers have always been underpaid, though things are slightly better now.

Material

The shortage of material is even more hampering to the industry than the shortage of labour. It is significant that in the President's address to the Employers' Association he mentions ' raw material and the cultivation of the willow ' with arbitration, unemployment, technical training, research and export conditions as certainly being amongst the important questions which will claim the consideration of the Interim Reconstruction Committee, of which he is Chairman. Though a confirmed free-trader, he speaks emphatically of the need for English cultivation. He is also President of the Midland Employers' Association, and it is from the Midlands that the need of English willow cultivation is most strongly expressed. But as we have seen it is endorsed by London merchants. The secretary of the London trade-union, speaking of the 47-hours' week, said it was the dream of the workman to own a bit of land, and cultivate it in his spare time. Ellmore's newly published book on osier cultivation¹ is found in the hands of town and country makers ; the local makers with only one exception consider that it pays the basket-maker to grow his rods. A London merchant recently bought over £500 worth from near Newbury, and an Oxford merchant supported the evidence of the local basket-makers as to the neglect and lack of labour on the local beds. Two retailers of baskets, however, added a caution with regard to foreign imports which are expected when the damaged Belgian beds come into full bearing and the continental scarcity is met, one of

¹ *The Cultivation of Osiers and Willows*, by W. P. Ellmore, Dent, 1919.

them mentioning that at one time there was a slump in osiers.

The question of osiers is largely one of quality. For some types of work, light 'osiers' are required, such as are grown with great success in France. For the heavy work the rods of Somersetshire do well enough, but rods are apt to be spoilt (1) if the leader is eaten by a fly, (2) if it is cut by the frost. This causes them to branch out, to be rough and difficult to work, adding considerably to the time which the basket-makers must spend on his work, and spoiling the results. Different varieties thrive in different soils; one experienced grower considered that sets should be put in various places experimentally for a year, before deciding which variety to adopt. Asked what it would cost he remarked, 'Do you mean to do the thing properly?' and mentioned from £30 to £50 an acre; another grower who had experimented with great success mentioned £50; and one landlord interested in a soldiers' hospital is said to have spent £100 an acre on planting. The tending and cutting is expert work; beds are damaged by not being kept clean while the sets are young, and the stools can be ruined by bad cutting. Much of the local material is so poor as to be of little use to the makers, who therefore prefer foreign rods. Usually the makers in this district buy the rods standing and cut them themselves, paying women or children to sort and strip them, and boiling them if for buff work in a tank. It takes five years for willows to reach their full bearing capacity, though in three years the yield is considerable, and a few can be cut even the first year.

Conclusion

To sum up, with regard to organization, there are two types of basket-making firms which are likely to continue to prosper. On the one hand there is the factory, situated in a centre where (1) material is easily obtained in large quantities and where (2) large orders can be quickly executed, thus avoiding the long storage of bulky material and still bulkier product, and the costly method of transport in small quantities. Thus the industry has become localized in seaport towns, and in big midland towns such as Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, and Leeds. Factories use large quantities of baskets; the neighbourhood of paper-mills would give an opening. On the other hand, there is the rural workshop on a small scale, making mainly for a purely local market, undertaking all kinds of work, including

repairs, and in most cases having a shop in which to display samples.

With regard to labour, the town journeyman keeping to the same class of work, if not to a single article, makes more money on the piece rates, but an apprentice or journeyman is more likely to become independent if he has learnt the whole business and can adapt himself to the demand. In a striking number of cases in various occupations, independence is preferred to higher earnings and shorter hours. The preference usually goes with a genuine love of the craft pursued and a broad-minded interest in its many aspects ; it is also worthy of note how many rural craftsmen and their sons have risen to responsible positions.

With regard to material, both types of successful industry are connected with the source of material. Large basket-making firms in London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, are also rod merchants, selling their surplus to smaller firms. In the Trent Valley many osiers are grown ; these have helped the Midland industry. The rural basket-maker cultivates at least a few rods if he can, and wishes to cultivate more, though in some cases evolution has separated the two industries. He recognizes the need of expert knowledge, and novices are ready to avail themselves of expert advice. At the present time, the skilled rod grower is doing very well indeed, and the need for better cultivation is felt throughout the trade. As for promoting the cultivation on a large scale, the opinion has been expressed on many sides that osier growing is a form of cultivation which pays as well as any, and that excellent rods can be grown in England. But in view of the uncertainty of future prices, and of the slump in the past, the need is felt in the trade for research. But there is sufficient evidence to show that in riverside districts osier growing and basket-making have been interdependent, and that in suitable areas they should be carried on in close co-operation, if not by the same people. If this is not done, rods should be carried to basket-works at a distance, rather than baskets be sent to distant markets.

With regard to expansion, the proceedings of the Interim Reconstruction Committee show that there is considerable scope, probably for women as well as men ; and in rural areas, growth and development are seen to increase the demand for household, garden, factory, and commercial requisites, of which baskets are one. The development of aeroplanes also creates a demand for baskets.

With regard to training, it is of the utmost importance

that it should be thorough and efficient, and in this connexion it may be remarked that great scorn is expressed by professional basket-makers for the poor work which was turned out from some of the hospitals where amateur teachers were relied upon, and that the trade-union restriction in the number of apprentices is partly due to the fear of undercutting by makers of poor quality. Experience shows that the success of the basket-maker in England depends on a high standard, and this is one of the aspects in which the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee is interested.

With regard to capital, the failure of a rural basket-maker through setting up with insufficient capital is more disastrous than in the case of a town one. Basket-making requires little capital compared with other trades, but a reserve or credit is necessary ; otherwise in bad times the temptation to undercut for the sake of a little ready money for family needs is irresistible. Capital for osier-growing is also needed by rural basket-makers, and in most cases a retail shop is a great help, and the connexion with big firms who can supplement the basket-maker's own work may be valuable.

It may be thought that the laws of supply and demand will adjust the supply of labour and material to the demand for baskets, but in the present circumstances the demand is urgent and the supply not ready ; osier cultivation and basket-making need time, skill, and experience, and meanwhile there is neglected land which is suitable for osier-growing thus giving occupation to men and women who are ceasing work connected with the War. There is on this account a case for speedy action on the lines of the following suggestions which are believed in general policy to represent the wishes and opinions of the trade.

A County Agricultural Committee, or a group of Agricultural Committees in neighbouring counties, especially in the Midlands, might apply to the Board of Agriculture for a Grant in aid of the necessary expenses of salary, &c., and undertake to make as soon as possible a survey of osier beds and of land suitable and available for osiers, and to approach the landowners as to leasing these beds for a term of years.

A panel of experienced osier-growers might be formed, in suitable localities, to give advice as to situation, soil, variety of willows, and all other problems of cultivation, so that local experience and wider scientific knowledge should be available for intending osier-growers. Basket-makers could be informed of all particulars of the panel

through the Trade Organizations, or where not yet organized, through the local authorities ; the After-Care Committees for the blind, and the Authorities dealing with training and re-settling of the disabled, should also be put in touch with the panel. Experiments in setting and growing osiers in different soils could be conducted at the Rothamsted Experimental School, or by some other body undertaking scientific research. It would be desirable, where necessary, to assist basket-makers or osier-growers of a good type with a grant or loan in respect of the initial outlay on cleaning and rent for the first three years, and it might be advisable to guarantee the rent during this period. It would be well if all grants were conditional on an undertaking to work under supervision or inspection of a person approved by the panel, and to keep accounts according to an approved method and submit them for inspection during the period for which the grant or loan is made. Every encouragement should be given, and the support of the Basket-Makers' Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee should be solicited for all schemes which will affect the trade.

CHAPTER III

NEEDLEWORK AND SIMILAR INDUSTRIES

(a) Glove-making

GLOVE-MAKING is to a considerable extent a rural industry, the cut-out gloves being made up by village women in their homes, and in village factories, and small firms still carrying on the whole process in country towns. The industry extends from Worcestershire to Devonshire, and it has also been heard of in Northumbrian villages ; for some gloves the 'East End' is probably more important than all the other areas together. The chief centre in Oxfordshire is Woodstock, where there are eight glove factories. At Charlbury there are four ; at Chipping Norton two ; at Oxford one has recently been opened ; at Witney there is one. Another large glove factory is now (1920) in process of being built in Oxford.

Some of the factories are independent, being managed by the proprietor, himself a skilled glover ; some are branches of bigger factories elsewhere ; while others are owned by leather dressing firms and by commercial houses which carry on a wholesale or retail business, or both, in gloves and sports appliances. The small branches are managed sometimes by skilled foremen belonging to the locality, and sometimes by business managers.

Besides the factories where the whole of the processes are carried out, there are workshops and sewing schools for women only, under the management of a forewoman or teacher, with occasional visits from the manageress responsible for organizing all the women's work of a firm. A number of outworkers are employed in connexion with these workshops.

Processes of Manufacture

The work is subdivided into many processes. Men do cutting, staking, packing, and sorting ; women do making, pointing, finishing, button-holing, putting in fasteners, padding, and other processes according to the type of glove. The number of cutters employed is the key to the industry, the work of one cutter affording employment for a large

number of women. The proportion between different classes of workers in and attached to one of the local factories is as follows :

	MEN.		
Cutters	12		
Sorter and puncher	1		
Manager	1		
	WOMEN.	<i>Indoor.</i>	<i>Outdoor.</i>
Pointers	2		
Makers	5		87
Liners	—		4
Finishers	—		6
Learners	2		—
Tiers	4		3
Welters	1		2
Sprayer	—		1
Total	14	·	103

but there are many variations according to the type of glove made. There is considerable difficulty in adjusting the numbers of various classes. The following figures were given by the largest employer of female labour in Oxfordshire to illustrate the shortage of female labour, but they include areas outside the county :

Week Ending.	Dozen Pairs.		Pre-war output reckoned at 1,150 doz. pairs per week.
	Cut.	Made.	
April 12, 1919	614	567	
" 19, "	908	770	
" 26, "	896	580	
May 2, "	789	910	
(Leaving 380 unmade)	3,207	2,827	

The correct proportion of male to female workers was given as one to six. In the small firms we find the proprietor doing the cutting himself or employing a single cutter and two or three boys to help him, the making being done by outworkers, and the proprietor's wife or a woman employee pointing before they are sent out and finishing when they come back.

Glove-cutting is a highly skilled trade, the period of apprenticeship, which used to be sometimes as much as ten years, being now as long as five or six. Cutting involves hard work in stretching the skins,¹ and is not considered suitable for women. They have, however, been employed successfully in cutting fabric gloves which require no stretching. Little skill is attached to the other work done by men or boys, machinery being used to slit the fingers.

¹ Skins are stretched lengthways so that they may stretch broadways when fitted on the hand.

Making, i.e. seaming the different parts together,¹ is as a rule the only process now done by home workers, except for the padding of cricket gloves in Woodstock. The reason for this is that the making is a longer process; pointing, buttoning, and finishing are quickly done, and it is not worth while to send out large batches of gloves, nor is it worth while for the same outworker to have a separate machine for different processes. In some cases other processes have been done by the same outworkers who do the 'making', but the work is apt to be badly done unless under supervision in a factory.

Local Conditions of Labour

Several factories and sewing schools and a large number of outworkers were visited in the spring of 1919. Conditions were changing rapidly, and the following description will show what they were before the recent movement for organization had taken much effect in Oxfordshire, the most backward county in this respect. Organization was described as chaotic, and the truth of this statement was borne out by investigation in the village where the greatest number of gloveresses are found. They were working for nearly a dozen different firms, each with its own rates of pay and system of deductions. It is the policy of the firms to keep as many hands as possible on their books ready for a time of stress, and the policy of the workers to take gloves from several firms in case of a shortage or cessation of work. The gloves come by rail, post, agent-carrier, managers in motors or on motor cycles, or are taken to the nearest dépôt by the workers themselves who may spend half a day on the journey.

Earnings are difficult to estimate owing to the system of piece-rates and the numerous varieties of gloves made. The whole industry is paid by piece-rates which apply to factory hands and outworkers alike. A good cutter can earn £5 or £6 a week, and an apprentice expected to make £5 a week immediately on finishing his term of service. Dissatisfaction was expressed at the rates being lower in this district than in the towns. Rates had risen by 108 per cent. on the pre-war rates of each district. Stakers, whose work is unskilled, were getting more than cutters, and similarly amongst the women, pointers were getting more than makers, the reason being that a very slight rise, e.g. of a farthing per dozen means a big increase on the large output of the unskilled workers. These anomalies however

¹ 'Forelettes' are the pieces sewn in between the fingers, 'quirks' are

were shortly to be put right by the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee, a form of Whitley Council which is described in Chapter II.¹

By giving charts to be filled in for a week by forty home-workers, it was found that the average earnings of machinists were a little over 4*d.* an hour, and those of handworkers from 1*½d.* to 3*½d.* These figures do not represent the average earnings in the locality as a whole, for the charts were for the most part filled in by employers of the most backward firms. But it was admitted by the manager of the best firm that the rates were too low throughout, the average earnings being probably not more than 5*d.* for machinists and 3*d.* for handworkers. Deductions are made for thread on the grounds that it might be extravagantly used. One firm only was supplying it free. Machinists also have a heavy expense to meet in buying their own machines, except in the case of the biggest firm which lends them free of charge. These machines, however, cannot be used except for gloves, while the machines which the workers purchase can be adjusted to ordinary sewing. This is seldom done, and yet the worker gets no return in higher payment on the grounds that she bears manufacturers' costs. But she has the advantage of being free to work for any firm. The prices charged to workers for these machines are three times as great as would be the cost to a firm which purchased them. Payment is in instalments and may last over a year. In the sewing rooms too, the girls hire or own their machines. These have cost them recently as much as £10 and £11. The average weekly earnings of eight machinists who filled in charts were 8*s.* 3*½d.* and the weekly instalment for the machine was recently 5*s.* a week, so that their net earnings for about forty weeks would, with deductions for thread, oil and insurance, be barely 3*s.* a week. Home workers seldom give more than four days a week to gloving, and even on these days, household duties have to be done in most cases. The other days are reserved for washing and house-cleaning. It cannot be wondered that the backward firms find gloveresses scarce and that the best firm, which supplies machines and gives facilities for training, is attracting the workers.

The very low rates which obtained previous to recent reforms can be attributed on the one hand to the lack of organization amongst the firms and the low standard of the more backward firms, and on the other hand to the low agricultural wages and the necessity of supplementing the family earnings while a young family was growing up.

¹ See pp. 34, 35 and 142-4.

Many a mother has had to toil in this way during the years in which she could least spare time and energy from her home duties. People in one village were regular cowed down one of the older women in the principal gloving villages said. The pre-war rates appear to have been not more than half the average calculated on the charts. Women would undercut one another for the scanty shillings and the work alternated between rush and idleness. The hardship which was involved in cases where a woman had to support herself on the work is obvious.

The usual method for sickness insurance is for the firm to deduct a penny and pay the other fivepence on each unit of 9s. for hand work, and to deduct threepence on each unit of 13s. for machine work. Home workers seldom, if ever, earn enough for the firm to be liable for half the insurance during the whole year, varying sums therefore have to be made up by the worker at the end of the year. In Yeovil, before the unit system was devised, the effect of the Act was to stop home work in favour of factory work. A similar effect is seen in the Ready-made Clothing Industry. One married woman gave the insurance benefit as her reason for making gloves.

During the past year, great improvements have been effected in the conditions, partly owing to the keen demand for female labour by all the firms, and partly to the influence of the progressive elements amongst both employers and employed. Separation allowances and high wages obtainable by girls in aeroplane hangars and other works, and greater prosperity amongst the agricultural labourers was causing a great decline in the number of gloveresses. The Workers' Union is determined that gloving shall not be done under the old sweated conditions, and the better firms realize that the only way to establish the industry on a sound footing is to raise the standard of pay and the quality of work.¹ Thus the number of sewing schools where young workers can be trained has been increased.² The following account shows the methods of the firm whose workers were seen to be working under far the best conditions, so far as Oxfordshire is concerned.

In the chief factory the machines are worked by power. There is a branch factory in Oxfordshire employing ten men and five boys, and two sewing schools in neighbouring villages for training outworkers (of whom there are about 120 working for this firm) to use treadle machines.

¹ For recent piece-rates see p. 143 under Organization of the Workers.

² But subsequent events indicate that employers were eager to get enough hands for the post-war boom in trade.

When the outworkers are proficient, the machines are taken home on loan. The instructresses at the schools are in touch with the local factory, and the neighbourhood is visited once a month by the organizer from Worcester who is in charge of the women's work for the firm. These schools are not permanent rooms, in fact the organizer was contemplating a collapsible building which could go from village to village spending a few weeks in each. Girls vary in the time it takes them to learn ; six weeks is usually considered sufficient, but to become a skilled gloveress who can keep up her output a much longer time must be allowed. The organizer was much interested in hearing that a preference had been expressed in some of the villages for working in a small factory rather than at home, and stated that with twenty workers on the premises and outworkers as well, such a factory would pay. She hoped to work groups of villages from a centre, using a motor to take the superintendent and to distribute the work ; isolated villages would be too costly in administration.

With regard to training, the better firms realize that any influence which tends to raise the quality of the work is to the good of the industry, and would welcome educational facilities. The organizer finds that the rural work is as good as the town work which has deteriorated since the workers have been doing quite unskilled work (machine minding) in munition works. With regard to discipline, she has no difficulty in the country. This firm evidently has excellent teachers and superintendents. Another manageress found the village workers inferior in skill and speed to those in town, and put it down to the fact that, there being less inducement to spending in a village, the girls are apt to slack off at the end of the week when they have earned the specific amount desired.¹ In view of the urgency of increasing the output, the fact that increased rates mean diminished output is annoying to the employers. Probably, however, this is due to the suspicion which the extreme irregularity of employment, combined with sweat rates in the past, has implanted in the minds of the workers. The fact that firms are developing small factories promises greater regularity, since these workers will have to be insured against unemployment; it is obvious that one reason for employing so many outworkers has been the fluctuating demand for work. Another reason, however, is the traditional skill of the women in gloving villages. Where a girl

¹ This complaint is almost universal in town and country alike.

has ' been among gloving ' she learns more quickly than one who has never seen it. The Worcester firm stated that its best workers were outworkers, and some experiments made by this firm with regard to the effects of fatigue on output brought out very interesting points. They make a practice of allowing their rural workers time off for seasonal occupations, such as potato lifting in and near Charlbury, fruit picking and hay-making in the Evesham district and Dorsetshire. They find that the output of these workers is superior in quality and quantity to the output of those engaged in gloving all the year round, partly because the strain on the eyes is relieved, and partly no doubt because the workers come fresh after a change to their work. Cutters employed by this firm were working about three hours a day overtime during the war. At first their output increased from approximately fifteen to eighteen dozen pairs a week, but at the end of the eighteen months it had dropped to the level of their normal week. One manager is inclined to the view that the interruptions of the home worker give just that refreshment which advocates of Scientific Management now considered necessary (e. g., 10 minutes rest per hour) for the best output. For the same reasons, progressive firms welcome recreational movements which tend to make village life more interesting.

Material

The staple material is sheep-skin, the heavier skins being tanned or sometimes pipeclayed or coloured for riding, driving, and sports gloves. The lighter skins, mostly English, are dressed, oiled, and bleached or dyed for Chamois washable gloves. Sheep-skins vary greatly in texture and thickness according to the breed and the climate where the sheep are reared. The 'Chamois' gloves are made to a large extent from English skins. Skins are imported from S. Africa, India, Arabia, Australia, &c., roughly preserved but not dressed.

Small firms are at a serious disadvantage in obtaining material as against larger firms with capital and agents in various parts of the world. It appears that the possession of large stocks of leather is in some cases the cause of a rush for labour while high prices prevail. Since the beginning of the war there has been a great shortage. Recently large quantities of skins and hides have again been imported, but after dressing they are exported to Europe and America.

Organization

Leather glove manufacturers are organized in the following associations :

The Worcestershire and District Glove Manufacturers Association.

The Yeovil and District Association of Glove Manufacturers.

There is also a National Association of Fabric Glove Manufacturers.

The three largest firms employing labour in Oxfordshire are now organized; they employ between them most of the workers in all the chief gloving centres; firms paying less than the standard rate find workers difficult to get. These Associations do not exist solely for the purpose of combating labour.

With regard to regularity of employment, the principal firm believes that with proper organization and development of the export trade, there need be practically no unemployment in the industry, and resents the payment of insurance for unemployment. It was noticed that the small firms had no hope that the trade would ever be regular, except in a case where they kept to a stock class of goods for a steady market, but another big firm in the neighbourhood also hopes for great improvement in this respect. Its representative pointed out the difficulty of the small firm with little capital, which could make to order only, and not for stock, and therefore attempted to catch labour for busy times, only to drop it when the rush was over.

But this tendency was by no means confined to the smaller firms, and many workers prefer to keep to an old firm at very low rates rather than take higher rates from a firm in which they have no confidence for keeping them employed.

The workers are organized in the following Unions :

The Amalgamated Society of Gas, Municipal and General Workers.

The Workers' Union.

The Amalgamated Society of Glovers (men only).

The United Glovers' Mutual Aid Society (for Yeovil).

Gloveresses belong to the two General Unions. It is believed that the numbers have increased rapidly lately, but at the time of investigation little headway had been made. The indirect influence, however, had been considerable. The fact of being invited to join the Workers' Union with the agricultural labourers, and the propagandist work carried on in the villages was showing the women the

need of standing by one another and not undercutting one another's rates. The good effect was greatly enhanced by the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee set up in June 1918. These committees are a form of Whitley Council, devised for those trades still too backward in organization for the Joint Industrial Council in its complete form. The threat of establishing a Trade Board has had the effect in this industry of stimulating voluntary organization, and the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee was successful in fixing a standard time-rate of 8*d.* an hour on which all women's piece rates are to be adjusted. This was raised in November 1919 to 8½*d.*¹ The rulings of the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committees have not, like those of a Trade Board, the sanction of the law, and the small firms have not yet joined the Associations, but it is up to the organizations of workers and employed which are represented in equal numbers on the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee to see that they are carried out. It is believed that the rates are actually being paid on this basis now, and it is not likely, with the keen competition for labour, that firms offering less would obtain workers.²

Trade Competition

Competition was keen before the war from Belgium and Germany. France cannot be rivalled in the lighter suede and kid gloves, in which she excels, but England can hold her own in the heavier driving gloves and other heavier makes, and also in the washable gloves which are in vogue since about 1910, when improved methods of dressing and bleaching were introduced. Competition is also keen from America and is feared from Japan. English gloveresses have been inferior in care and finish to the makers of the Continent, and great importance is attached to quality and therefore to training and general education in raising the standard and steadyng the output. It is probable that the industry will continue to be a rural industry, and interest is shown in the possibilities of developing electric power, both in village workshops and in cottages themselves. Owing to the small bulk and weight in proportion to the value of the article, expenses of transport can be borne in this industry³ provided organization is economical. The

¹ Now after the resumption of foreign competition it appears that the rates have been pushed too high. January 1921.

² For activities of Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committees, see Section on Organization in the General Discussion, p. 35.

³ Contrast the Ready-made Clothing Industry, in which the bulk and weight of material is likely to be prohibitive to outwork.

utter lack of organization and the low status of agricultural labour were the causes of the low standard of work and wages in the industry, but organization has created a revolution, and it appears likely that the industry may thrive under modern conditions now that the attention of employers and workers is directed, by their representation on the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee, not merely to discussions on hours and wages, but to the means by which the industry can be developed. Whether the large factory recently built in Oxford will swamp the rural industry in this county remains to be seen. But it is clear that any schemes for further development of the rural side of the industry would have little chance of success without the support of the trade, and that this support should be enlisted through the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee. A liaison officer from the Ministry of Labour is attached to the Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee and regularly attends the meetings, and is the recognized channel between the trade and the Government.

Conclusion

That the industry is expected to flourish is obvious from the capital that is being sunk in machinery and the efforts that are being made to train young workers. The firms which are likely to prosper are those in which the village factory is a branch of some bigger establishment. These firms in several cases have their own leather-dressing works and are in several instances connected with retail houses, e. g. of sports goods, the gloving being one department only. Though the rates have been low they are now standardized. With regard to regularity of employment it was noticed that the small local firms with the exception of one which kept to a single type of serviceable glove, admitted that there were great fluctuations and believed that this would always be the case. The better firms, however, hope for more regularity. The fluctuations of demand are evidently a reason why home work is employed, no unemployment insurance being paid on home workers, but the development of small workshops may therefore be taken as an indication of the hope for greater regularity. The firms which can make for stock are in a better position in this respect than the firms which cannot afford to make except for actual contract. At present the shortage, expense and poor quality of the material is hampering the industry, and particularly the small firm with less facility for buying on favourable terms. The demand for gloves is greatly in excess of the supply,

and there is keen competition for all classes of labour of good quality, but especially for makers who are women. Electric power is being used in Woodstock for turning the sewing machines and is apparently being contemplated in the villages.¹ The work is popular amongst a certain type of girl who does not care for the life in a noisy factory. It is popular with those parents who do not care for their young girls to leave them for work at a distance. But most girls would much prefer the sociability of a village factory to working in their own homes, and it would probably be better for them. It may here be remarked that from this point of view the encouragement of the village workshop for girls would be wise, especially while it is necessary for them to earn while still very young. It would be particularly valuable if the industry in question could be so organized that the girls need not work whole-time in the factory, but could be free to help in the home or the garden. For seasonal work, one firm makes a point of releasing its workers, e. g. for fruit picking, &c. As things are at present, little girls or boys have far too heavy burdens placed upon their shoulders in looking after the younger children and helping with the work. If the cottages were larger, and there were suitable opportunities for an elder girl to earn something towards her maintenance for the first few years after leaving school, it would often be very beneficial to the family. In the present concentration on the economic aspect of industry, other considerations are apt to be overlooked. The existence of a village industry which afforded employment for young girls would enormously simplify the problem of continued education. Even in cases where the industry itself is a blind alley, training could meanwhile be given with a view to other employment later. If domestic service is followed, a girl of sixteen or eighteen is more fit than a girl of fourteen, and the mothers who can keep their girls at home for these few years would welcome part-time occupation for them. Employers, however, would not wish to train large numbers of young gloveresses for temporary employment only, and the whole problem of adolescent labour is too important to be left wholly to the responsibility of individual firms. With regard to girls, it has been found in various industries that they will not take the trouble to learn skilled processes, for, unlike a boy, they do not look upon their employment as a permanent means of livelihood, but as a temporary occupation to cease with marriage. The neatness and cleanli-

¹ But 'making' is rarely done on power machines,

ness of the gloveresses' homes made a very favourable impression which may very well be due to the opportunities for training in housewifery afforded by this home industry.

There is at the present time such a demand for reliable labour, though limited to some extent by the shortage of leather, that the best firms would probably be willing to co-operate in educational or social schemes calculated to improve and steady the supply of gloveresses. It is realized by the employers that the supply depends on making the conditions attractive, and improving the amenities of village life. Since in the Oxfordshire villages gloving is at present the only industry of any considerable extent which affords openings for women, it would be well to take advantage of its opportunities.¹

At the same time it is felt that alternative occupations should where possible be provided, and probably the methods of collective marketing already being applied to garden produce, &c., could be extended to certain lines of clothing other than gloves, which, with careful organization, could be profitably made in villages.

Experiments in leather dressing and gloving on co-operative lines might also be useful. And in cases where the gloveresses own their machines, instruction in adjusting them to other kinds of needlework, e. g. by the County Council Instructor in dressmaking, would probably be welcome.

Lectures on the industry would certainly interest the workers, and might help to clear their minds as to the cost of production, for with the tradition of sweated rates the huge present prices are an obvious cause of dissatisfaction.

Hand-gloving, owing to the ease with which it can be taken up for a short time, the small space it takes, and the pleasantness of the work, when the skins are well dressed and not too dark in colour, is particularly suitable for the home worker, it being hardly worth while to do machine work unless a considerable time can be spent on it. But it is doubtful whether the public will be willing to pay the price which the new standardized rates will involve. Expenses of administration are heavy in proportion to the small output of a handworker. But this branch of the industry is one which might be taken up by voluntary organizations,

¹ A scheme was to have been carried out under the Employment Bureau for training a few women in receipt of unemployment donation at Woodstock. But owing to the prospective opening of a big factory in Oxford, the scheme fell through, since some of the workers would have had to travel from Oxford for their training.

in conjunction with other home industries for delicate and older women. Arrangements could be made with a firm for ready-cut gloves, or skilled cutters could be employed. The dressing of 'chamois' can be done in villages, and it is probable that some women could learn to cut and stretch these lighter skins in the proper way.¹ By a well-organized system of co-operative selling, these gloves might find their 'quality market' with other good rural products. They are superior in wear and comfort to machine-sewn gloves of the same type. But the public has still to learn that hand-work, if it is to survive, must be adequately paid for according to the time and skill required.

Rabbit-Skin Gloves

The curing of rabbit-skins and making them into 'bag' gloves, with knitted or wash-leather palms is a popular industry amongst Women's Institutes in Oxfordshire. There is a keen local demand for these, and the rate of 6d. an hour on which prices were based by the Fur Craft Guild proved sufficiently attractive for women with a certain amount of leisure to take up the work with zest. Sales are for the most part made privately through friends. Probably quick and proficient workers can earn considerably more after a period of practice than 6d. an hour, and the home curing of skins, if well done, is undoubtedly profitable. Skins fetching only 2d. in a village, are, if cured and sent to Worcester for glove-making, worth a shilling. There is much room for improvement in curing, but Institute members are extremely interested in comparing notes as to methods, and considerable improvement is being effected. The type of gloves usually made are easily cut, not requiring a skilled cutter.

Experience in the fur-glove industry points to the possibility of co-operating with gloving firms with a view to getting the cut-out palms and other parts, and making more elaborate fur gloves. Care should be taken that the prices charged do not mean lower earnings than those fixed by the Glove Industry Interim Industrial Reconstruction Committee, and expert instruction and a high standard of work is essential.

(b) Leather Dressing

There are two distinct methods of dressing sheep-skin for gloves. Dark gloves are tanned or coloured and treated with a preparation of egg-yolk to make them soft and

¹ Women's Institutes are cutting and making leather gloves entirely by hand. On this experiment it is hoped to report later.

elastic. Large quantities of eggs are imported for this purpose. 'Chamois' and other light washable gloves are dressed in oil and soft soap, and bleached in the sun or by chemicals. The first process is almost extinct as a small rural industry, owing to the use of large machinery. Just as the rural shoe-makers have been affected by the concentration of tanning, where the processes are greatly expedited by use of machinery, so small gloving firms, no longer carrying on, or connected with, local leather-dressing works, have to buy their material in the open market. By comparison of a large leather-dressing factory at Abingdon with small fellmongering works, it appears that concentration in a factory where the skins can be quickly dealt with is in the interest of health. In spite of the odour, this industry is stated to be healthy. Labour-saving machinery was still in process of instalment to minimize fatigue and assist the cleanliness of the operations. Experiments have been made by this firm in employing women on processes where only men have been employed before, and these have met with much success. Of about 500 employees more than half were women. Equal piece-rates are given to men and women; three women are said to do as much work as two men. The hours were short, and it was said that the women could earn from £2 to £3 a week. Skins are dressed in a number of ways at this factory, the speciality being a fine white washable leather. The waste is sold for lining jewel cases.

The old-fashioned methods, which are now practically extinct, were heard of in a leather-dressing and colouring factory at Woodstock which had been closed. It was stated to have been an unhealthy trade, the men employed seldom living beyond fifty. The air was thick with chemicals, and the egg mixture 'could be smelt a mile off'. This was trodden into the skins in large barrels by men 'trotting about on it' until the skins had absorbed all the egg and the water was left clear. In modern factories fans are used to carry off the dust of the colouring substance; the skins are churned by machine and salted yolk is used for the dressing.

The question of starting leather-dressing factories on co-operative lines in connexion with municipal or co-operative abattoirs in a gloving district deserves attention. The nearest works, apart from those at Abingdon, are at Hereford, Bristol, and Chippenham. Hides are bought up by dealers, who visit the markets and send to the big factories.

It would be necessary to have the factory on a large enough scale to make it worth while to put in up-to-date machinery. The Abingdon works deal with an enormous number of skins every week. The finishing processes of chamois dressing are done by local firms in some cases, and wash leather can be seen bleaching in the sun at Woodstock. It would be worth while to investigate further the possibilities of chamois dressing and of curing and furring as a rural industry connected with the manufacture of fur and wash-leather articles out of local material.

(c) Ready-made Clothing

Only two firms which employ rural labour in the wholesale clothing industry have been found in the district investigated. One of these is established in Oxford and the other in Abingdon. They used to be branches of the same firm, and the industry sprang from a debt paid by a linen draper to a small shopkeeper in the form of a bale of linen, towards the end of the eighteenth century. Out of this the shopkeeper's wife made a labourer's smock, which was soon bought by a passing farm labourer; she sold a succession of smocks and so the industry was built up. The sign of the old shop is kept as a relic on the factory wall. This firm still made labourers' smocks within living memory, but the village smockers have almost died out. Now both firms make men and boys' 'top clothing', i. e. suits.

Of trade organization there is little to be said. The rural work consists in this district entirely of outwork, the machine-cut garments being distributed in a few villages and in Abingdon for making up or finishing at home. Generally it is the finishing—i. e. sewing in linings—which is put out. This must be done by hand. Some outworkers take machine work.

Large quantities of outwork used to be done in the villages round Liverpool, Colchester, and elsewhere; but apart from a temporary impetus given to outwork by the shortage of female labour and of factory accommodation, outwork in this industry is dying out. Three reasons were given for this, and these show that a revival on the old lines is improbable and undesirable. First, tailoring has been done by the very poor as outworkers under insanitary and unsatisfactory conditions. In Abingdon it is done in the poorest and dirtiest parts of the town. The homes of village outworkers are often better and cleaner than those where the

housewife goes out to work, but the lack of supervision makes it difficult to keep up the standard of work. Homework used to be done on the worst and cheapest lines of clothing, and the demand for this class of goods has declined, especially since the war began. In the cheap lines country-made goods did not fetch so good a price as those marked 'London-made'. Secondly, during the last forty years a change in the trade has been taking place which has increased the cost of production all round, and is making the expense of outwork prohibitive. Orders are decreasing in size; where hundreds of the same make and size would have been ordered thirty years ago, dozens or less are ordered now. Fashion, even in men's clothes, changes more rapidly, and there is greater variety in the needs of different districts than formerly, so that demand is more difficult to estimate. This means that instead of putting out a week's work at a time, work has often to be taken out one day and brought back the next. The carriage of small and frequent parcels to villages several miles away is too costly. Thirdly, the passing of the Health Insurance Act has caused employers to substitute factory work for outwork, except in the case of outworkers whose output was sufficient to make the weekly insurance contribution worth the employer's while. At Abingdon the immediate result of the Act was to reduce the number of outworkers from 300 to 200, and this had in the summer of 1919 fallen to about 70. A fourth reason was that the work done recently on Government contract was not allowed to be put out. The fixing of minimum rates by the Trade Board established in 1911 was not cited as a reason for the decline in home work, but the rise in piece rates would no doubt tend to the discarding of the less efficient workers, although some of the older women are evidently kept on for personal reasons, having worked for many years for the same firm.

Conditions of Labour

A few outworkers in the villages of Cumnor and Appleton are employed by one of the firms who used to let contract work to a factory in a village a few miles away where outwork was also done, but this factory was closed down soon after the war began. This firm has also been contracting with employers of outworkers at Swindon, but hopes shortly to have all the work done on the premises. The other firm employs outworkers in Appleton, Culham, Sutton Courtenay, Drayton, and Wootton.

The following extracts are given from notes on interviews with outworkers :

A. Started work at 11 years old ; at that time did smock frocks for men. She does not remember what they were paid, but they were glad of the work, although it was badly paid. Now (at 70) she is too old to do much, but does what she can. She does trousers right through, but puts some of those allotted to her out to be done, paying the worker full price for them. When she married she took up trouser work and received as little as 1s. 6d. to 2s. a dozen. She thinks before the war they received 3d. each pair and 2½d. for 'fly-falls'. (Cannot say definitely what the price is now, she only knows it is 'all right'). 'It is much better now than it was in old days ; there is a bit of bonus and it all helps along.' The firm pays her a few shillings a year, not so much as a pound, for the use of her room, but she is well satisfied because the others pay her every week. She evidently acts as distributor.

B. Aged about 60. Worked at dressmaking a few years ago, and took up ready-made men's trousering because she could pick it up and put it down when she wanted to, and it fitted in with her home life better. Her husband does a lot of gardening ; they keep pigs, four goats and chickens. They 'believed in being a little bit self-supporting'. The work she does is termed finishing, all the machine work being done at Oxford. The home-workers put on buttons, make button-holes, put in watch pockets, rule pockets, and fill in linings. The work is taken to them by the firm on Mondays and Thursdays, the amount delivered depending on the orders the firm has. The workers are paid by the pair. Some weeks they get more and some less, but the master is fair, and distributes the work fairly. They are glad of the work and the money is a help. Before the war they were paid for one garment 3d. (finishing and pockets), now they receive 5d. and a war bonus. One pair does not take quite an hour to do. They were supposed to earn about 7d. an hour, and she thought they did earn about this. They had recently joined the United Garment Makers' Union, paying 3d. a week. The bonus had been 5d. in the 1s., now it was a little more.

C. Age 30-5. Soldier's wife. Took up work while husband was abroad. Receives 5d. a pair for one kind of trousers and 4d. for another (finishing) and a bonus of 5d. in the 1s., lately raised to 6d. ; she thinks this is due to the union. She thinks the money should have been paid on the trousers and not as a bonus, and that it will be taken off. They pay insurance, the firm paying 3d. on every 14s. earned. She is not always able to do 14s. worth. At the end of the year there are always (insurance) expenses to be paid by the workers.

D. This worker is considered one of the best in Abingdon. She finishes little boys' trousers. Pay is much better since she joined the Union. The Union Organization has made no trouble between the workers and employers, but has done a great deal of good. Some of the work is paid for at nearly double the previous rates. Before the additional pay it was very difficult to live on outwork, working almost night and day she could not earn sufficient.

The following are her net earnings, including bonus and allowing for deductions :

	s. d.
Week ending May 9, 1919	15 11½
" " 16, " : : : :	18 6
" " 23, " : : : :	23 1

She works from perhaps 8.30 in the morning till 8 at night except for

house work (cottage beautifully clean and a very superior one) and cannot afford to go out much. Her insurance card is fully stamped at the end of the time so that she has not to pay arrears. The bonus has made a great difference in this respect (i. e. 14s. can be earned in the week). She pays for thread and cotton about 6d. to 8d. in a fortnight. She would much rather work at home than in a factory. She is not strong and could not stand the noise, but can work well in the quiet. She used to keep house for her father who worked for this firm, and at his death was in great distress because she could not face factory life. They promised her work, and it is her livelihood.

All the workers spoke very highly of the firm.

These records show that trousers which used to be finished at 1½d. a pair and at 3d. before the war are now finished at 7½d. including the bonus. The work takes less than an hour, and probably the earnings are more than the minimum of 7d. an hour fixed under the Wages Temporary Regulation Act.¹ The following from a print issued from the Office of Trade Boards in April 1919 shows the movement of the minimum rates fixed by the Tailoring Trade Board :

Tailoring Trade Board (Great Britain)

A minimum rate for female workers of 3½d. an hour was fixed on August 19, 1912. This rate was varied to 3½d. an hour on July 19, 1915, to 4d. an hour on February 26, 1917, to 4½d. an hour on November 12, 1917, and to 5d. an hour on March 25, 1918.

On July 19, 1915, the rate was extended to cover certain branches of the Retail Bespoke Section of the trade.

A minimum rate of 6d. an hour for female workers employed in the cutting room was fixed on October 23, 1916.

A minimum rate for male workers of 6d. an hour was fixed on August 19, 1912. This rate was varied to 7d. an hour on February 26, 1917, and to 8d. an hour on November 12, 1917.

Under awards of the Committee on Production many workers, both male and female, receive bonus in addition to the rates to which they are otherwise entitled.

The minimum rate fixed by the Tailoring Trade Board for Ireland was raised in June 1919 to 8d. for men and to 4½d. for women, many workers receiving a bonus in addition. There was a fear of raising the Trade Board minimum rates to a level from which they might have to be reduced later and they were kept considerably lower than the amount actually paid under the Wages Temporary Regulation Act, by means of a bonus.

A Village Ready-Made Clothing Factory.

This factory employed at its busiest time between twenty and thirty women and girls. Most of the work was done

¹ Passed in order that there should not be a sudden drop from wartime wages.

in the factory, but for the handwork outworkers in three villages were also employed. The work was let on sub-contract by one of the local firms which supplied the garments ready cut-out. The profit to the contractor appears to have been small, and after the war had begun he could not pay enough to retain the workers. Labour was irregular and discipline difficult to maintain, and soon after the war the factory was closed down, because only seven girls remained. The women employed were mostly married. In its earliest days girls worked the machines and older women did the basting and pressing.

A. Aged about 50. Had worked at the factory from when she left school at thirteen to the time she married at twenty-four. She started basting at 3s. a week, working full factory hours, finally by small rises working at machine for 9s. a week. Did no home work, as she helped her mother, the rest of the family being boys.

B. Aged about 60. Worked at factory up to 13 years ago; payment for pressing and basting was 6s. 6d. a week. Hours 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Machine hands working same hours received 8s. to 9s. The days she 'worked at the factory were the happiest days of her life'. She 'would gladly go back to work again and no end of girls (in this village) would go back'. She worked for 16 years at the factory and was a widow. She brought up her two children on the 6s. 6d., the only help she received was from a brother for rent.

C. Aged 30-35. Worked as machinist at factory till she married. Hours were 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on week days; 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays, with 20 minutes for lunch, one hour for dinner and half an hour for tea, making an ordinary day of just over 10 hours. She went home for meals. After she married she took in work at home, doing finishing, button-holes, and sleeve-heads, receiving 7s., 8s., 9s., or 10s. a dozen. At this time she had five children. She enjoyed going to the factory.

The highest rate quoted, 9s. a week for a fifty-six hours' week (meal times excluded) would give less than 2d. an hour; it is therefore quite clear that the Trade Board regulation, which in 1912 fixed a minimum of 3½d., was evaded. Evidence points to the desirability of trade union organization in industries in which wages are regulated by a Trade Board.

Writing in 1915, Mr. R. H. Tawney (*Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry*) pointed to trade union organization as the obvious means of ensuring the enforcement of the minimum rates, and already the trade boards had been found an incentive to organization. The fear of Workers' Union officials that the establishment of a Trade Board in the gloving industry would prevent the workers joining the union is not borne out by experience in the tailoring industry in this district, for the United Garment Makers' Union has been remarkably successful in enrolling outworkers and in improving their position. The rates have risen 150

per cent. since the war, and the workers who are kept on probably increased their weekly earnings proportionately. Employers and employed appear to be on excellent terms, and it is satisfactory to note that the employers have not recently had to complain of the poor quality of work. Though this may be partly due to the turning off of the less efficient, it is noticed that better pay is an encouragement to good work.

But it is evident that the employers regard outwork as a thing of the past in this industry, only surviving to meet a temporary difficulty. Neither is there any ground for expecting village factories to be established for producing clothing of this kind. On the other hand, the work, both in the home and in the factory, is undoubtedly popular, and though the expense of rural organization, and the increasing use of machinery for various purposes, makes it unlikely that men's tailoring will survive as a rural industry, these arguments do not necessarily apply to other forms of needle-work. In connexion therefore with the four needlework industries investigated, some opinions have been recorded, and suggestions made, as to the possibilities of co-operative effort and good organization in turning the village women's taste for needlework to better account.¹ This problem, however, since it touches on that of art and handicraft, is an extremely difficult one, and much local investigation will be necessary to discover how far the obstacles which beset the voluntary organizer can be overcome in any particular district.

(d) Machine and Hand-knitting

Here and there, in town and country, knitters are to be found who make their living, or part of it, by taking orders for knitting, generally from a woolshop or wholesale merchant, sometimes directly from neighbours. If wool can be bought under wholesale conditions, knitting can be made to pay, and a retailer of wool and fancy needlework has the additional advantage of a retail connexion and a window display. Retailers will employ knitters on the premises or put out the work to be done. At the present time, they are very busy owing to the shortage and exceedingly poor quality of woven hosiery, which it is to be hoped is only temporary, and to the fashion for knitted 'jumpers'. The following notes refer to interviews with two wool and fancy shopkeepers who knit for their customers, and with other individual workers :

¹ See p. 171.

A. Procured a machine three or four years ago. It pays her because she gets her wool wholesale. Would have to work very hard to make it pay alone. It needs attention, and she is constantly interrupted for the shop. She employs one woman, no demand at present to justify more. She can give 1s. a pair for stockings and 9d. for socks, but this bears no profit. She had been told that eighteen months ago the price given (by wholesale merchants) for knitting stockings was 3d. a pair. Many women are taken in by advertisements of knitting machines telling them they can earn £1 a week in their spare time. They cannot possibly do this as they have to buy wool in small quantities at retail prices. The swindle ought to be stopped. It is difficult now to get women to knit—e. g. gloves—by hand, because they are lazy, and won't use their brains.

B. Visited in July 1919. Employs eight girls, would not teach more. Has so many orders that she cannot make for stock. Would give 1s. 6d. or so for knitting ladies' stockings. The cashmere ones are so poor that there is a demand for knitted ones. People will give more for good things —e. g. a workman had ordered socks at 6s. a pair. Her girls divide the work; one machines, another finishes, another presses.

C. Another knitter spoke of home workers being taken in by sellers of knitting machines. A seller offers 4d. a pair for not less than ten dozen pairs of stockings. The machine is bought, the buyer not realizing how long it will take her to make the ten dozen. It takes a long time to learn to work rapidly, and in the winter the working day is short in the dark cottages. It is of little use to attempt it as part-time work unless the mornings can be given to it. She was just now giving a girl 15s. a week and her tea; the girl was not very satisfactory. Many girls will not give their minds to the work and it needs care. There is a good deal of finishing, when the machine part is done, and this too needs care. Girls at Waifs and Strays Homes are trained as knitters. Just now, ladies' knitted 'jumpers' were paying very well indeed. As a rule, she did not get anything like 7d. an hour and did not want to expand. She had just been asked for samples by a London firm, but had refused. She had the garden and a house which she let, and with the knitting she could make a living, but could not save. It paid her far better to work for London wholesale houses than for local private customers who thought that if a thing were made locally it ought to be cheap. She was very busy.

D. A male knitter in a small town was also visited. He brought up his family on his knitting; he, the son, and two daughters all knit. He left it off during the war owing to the cost of wool. The son is now doing something else, but the father and daughters want to take it up again. They have three machines, all out of repair. They make socks, stockings, vests, &c. At one time they were well off, but the business dwindled and dwindled, chiefly owing to the competition of the Co-operative Society (of which he is a member and strongly approves). They had got the address of the knitting machine manufacturer from him, and had had similar garments made in a big factory in Manchester. He would like to knit for a shop which should supply the wool, and the daughter said she would make inquiries from shops at Oxford. The father is old, and in receipt of a pension. They used to display samples in their small window and make any garment to order.

Machine-knitting is very suitable for vests, children's jerseys, &c. Socks and stockings, being nearly always made of two-ply wool, instead of four-ply, such as is used for hand-knitting, are very inferior in wear to hand-knitted ones,

though superior to woven hose in that they are easily refooted. As for machines, the flat are said to be easier to work than the round, though hose made on these have to be seamed up by hand, and this takes some time.

A few old hand-knitters were found. One male knitter was also a lace-maker. Ladies trying to revive hand-knitting as an industry have sold socks at less than they would cost knitted by machine. At the present time advertisements are to be seen for knitters of ladies' jumpers, which state that there is a great future for them. But it is not probable that the demand will expand very much, as machine-knitted jumpers are coming into vogue. Many people knit their own. With the coarser wool now used, however, there is very much less work in them than in the finer knitted coats of a few years ago, and it may here be remarked that the comparative simplicity and absence of elaborate trimming in ladies' and children's clothes is in favour of the hand-worker, since they depend on cut, style and colour, rather than on the amount of work put into them. If English knitters would adopt the German method of manipulating the wool, which is far quicker than that taught in England, they would have a better chance, but it is unlikely that hand-knitting is capable of much development as an industry, in spite of its great usefulness for family purposes and its value as a pastime and an additional source of income for those whose sight or health is failing.

The difficulties in the way of machine knitters are : (1) lack of organization for obtaining material or selling goods to advantage ; (2) want of skill in using machines ; (3) fraudulent advertisements of machines. As one of the industries which can be carried on by crippled or 'sub-ordinary' workers it is not without its value, and it is worth considering whether assistance could not be given to those in possession of machines by offering instruction in their care and use, and by establishing a dépôt for supplying material and disposing of produce. In a small town in East Yorkshire there is a stocking factory employing about fourteen girls in which the machines are run by power. It was doing well before the war ; it turned out hose, children's jerseys, caps, &c. By keeping each machine to a particular kind and size of garment, much time and trouble in setting the machines would be saved, and probably for this reason a knitter working at home ought to be in touch with a market which would take one or two articles in considerable quantity. It may be added that the United Garment Makers' Union which has done so much

for the employers in tailoring might also be successful with rural knitters.

There is a Joint Standing Industrial Council for the Hosiery Trade. There is nothing in the law to prevent a Trade Board being established in the unorganized sections of the industry, though there might be considerable opposition from the organizations. But a Trade Board would not touch the class most in danger of sweating, because they buy their wool, own their machines and sell their work, and are not employees. The knitting industry illustrates the dangers : (1) of instituting a Whitley Council in a trade not completely organized which covers any considerable number of unorganized workers ; (2) of evading standard rates, fixed either by a Trade Board or by organized workers, by supplying material and buying the product, or buying the product without supplying the material. The Ministry of Labour is paying attention to this difficulty, but it is extremely difficult to investigate the conditions in this industry. If all owners of machines were licenced, discovery and ventilation of grievances would be easier. But the hand-worker would not be safeguarded. The most hopeful remedy is education and better facilities for material, training and sale, through the Women's Institutes and other bodies who organize home industries. With the present vogue for hand-knitting it is of special importance to guard against exploitation.

(e) The Lace Industry

The 'Buckinghamshire lace' industry extends over Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire, and into the Chiltern and Thame district of Oxfordshire, and is still carried on by the older women.

The women sell a certain amount of lace privately, but the more usual methods are to dispose of it to dealers who send buyers to the cottages to take it into shops, or to dispose of it through one of the voluntary lace associations which have done much to revive the industry during the last twenty-five years. The condition of the workers can clearly be shown by quotations from letters received by ladies interested in the industry and the workers :

' When I came to live here nearly thirty years ago, I found the village workers in a sad state. They earned $\frac{1}{2}d.$ an hour in yarded lace, and 1d. an hour in borders or collars. All work had to be taken to a town seven miles away, the distance often walked. Sometimes the work was bought, sometimes not. When bought, half or whole value taken out in drapery goods. I put myself in communication with a London buyer, learnt to

make the lace, and began collecting, paying full value in money. After some years I was rewarded by hearing that Bedford buyers were paying full value in cash.

Since then so many collectors come round (there are ten now) that I have gradually withdrawn, especially as I do not like this coarse work called lace.... There is neither point nor yarded lace made here now. In fact nearly the whole village is making the coarse stuff, that is not worthy of the name of lace, compared with the beautiful fine work that used to be made here. Of course the reason is that it is much quicker made and better paid. One cannot blame the workers. They earn 3d. or 4d. an hour. I hear one mother with five children (one a baby) earned 10s. 6d. last week. Sixpence-halfpenny borders—pre-war—are now 1s. 10d. Pre-war 3d. yard lace is 11d. a yard. The cotton has increased from 4s. 6d. lb. to £1 4s. 0d. wholesale. Some workers in other villages still make the fine Beds. lace, mostly collars.'

From the Wycombe district :

'I am afraid there is no hope for the industry as far as development goes. The old lace-makers spent all their school-time from before they were five years old at their pillows, learning nothing else, and so acquired a quickness and dexterity in handling their bobbins and pins which none of the younger people can ever reach. No young woman who has attended an elementary school and learnt lace-making at home can make as much lace in an hour as her mother could in fifteen or twenty minutes.

The work can only be done as a little addition to the family income as, if it was paid for as it should be, the price would be a prohibitive one. Before the war an old woman working most of the day could just earn a living but she could not do so now.'

From an organizer of the lace industry :

'Trade dealers get hold of these lists and visit our workers.'

From another letter :

'I do not think the lace will ever produce a living wage; it is useful to the aged women, who can earn £5 or £6 a year to augment their old age pension, but my best workers do not earn 2d. an hour. I once tried to make this the minimum price, but I could not sell the lace, and I put it to the workers whether they would return to the lower price or cease working and they chose the former. I much fear the industry will entirely fail. I find it very difficult to get any order carried out, and several friends who belong to the different associations tell me the same thing.'

Another organizer says :

'I can no longer get fine typical Bucks laces made.'

The information contained in these letters is typical of what has been discovered by personal investigation, and may be summarized and supplemented as follows.

The Relation of Organization to Conditions of Work

Contrary to what is usually the case with rural industries, the poorer type of production pays best. Lace of the best quality does not find a market and has almost ceased to be made because the price given does not compensate for the

time spent. This may partly be due to the fact that the organizations for selling the better lace have not been efficient, through lack of capital or business ability or both. There is a keen demand for coarse lace¹ and buyers are competing with one another in the villages to get hold of it, and workers who do not need to earn their entire living are taking up the work and making 15s. a week or more.

The Anglo-Belgian Lace Association, with which several other Associations are now affiliated, recently raised the prices paid to the workers to double that which they were before the war. The pre-war earnings were in several cases quoted as 1½d. an hour; sometimes 2d. This Association is in a better position for selling the good work than organizers who have no London dépôt, and there is a demand for fine Bucks. lace, but it is difficult to get the women to make it.

A great deal of the coarse lace is sold by buyers at 10 per cent. commission to a merchant who carries on a considerable overseas trade, as well as disposing of quantities in English shops and privately. At the present time, the workers are getting better terms from the trade buyers than from the lace associations. But in comparing, a few months ago, districts where a lace association has been at work with other districts, it was found that, though the women did not receive more money per hour, they benefited, first, by their goods being bought and paid for as soon as they were finished, and secondly, by the interest taken in their skill. They were much encouraged by the interest and were helped by the loan of prickings and the certainty that all their work would be bought. Unfortunately, the price given for hand-made lace has been based on a standard of skill and speed which is quite impossible under modern conditions. Women brought up from childhood to produce lace as if they were machines had to compete with the Nottinghamshire machines and sell to a public which did not discriminate. Fashion now decrees that hand-made lace shall be used for household linen, but the public, which wants it cheap, still does not discriminate between the beauty and wearing qualities of well-designed and well-made lace and a web which is carelessly thrown together, and is inferior to a really good machine-made article. Lace-making has always been a fluctuating trade, and there is no certainty that the

¹ This demand continues in spite of the fact that foreign lace is now coming in in large quantities.

present boom will last. The type of lace now in vogue is similar to the cheaper sorts of the lace from Malta and Belgium, where it can be bought very cheap.

It is impossible to tell whether there is a future for good Bucks. lace, because no attempt has recently been made to pay a price to the workers which can compete with that given at the present time for the coarse kinds. It requires more skill as well as more time. Unless a fairly large output and sale can be secured it cannot possibly support the cost of selling. This is clear from the following account of the industry from a dealer's point of view.

A business worth thousands has been built up in lace of the Maltese type from very small beginnings, by buying direct from the cottage doors. Local persons of either sex with a little capital, say £50, which can be invested in lace, are invited to buy, and sell to the dealer at 10 per cent.¹ The best market is at Xmas and as neither the merchants nor the retailers care to tie up capital in stock which must be held for longer than can be helped, good prices are given before Xmas and there is a rush for the lace. The whole principle of this business is quick sales; therefore cheap types of lace are encouraged. It is possible to make a profit on a small commission on work for which there is a large middle-class demand, but it would not pay the dealers to stock the fine lace which is chiefly bought by the aristocracy. If voluntary associations, however, have capital at their disposal and can afford to wait, they have a better chance. A London retail dépôt would be far too costly for a merchant of this type who makes his profit at the busy seasons and wants to keep his running expenses low.

Competition between the trade and voluntary commercial organizations has benefited the worker to some extent. But the prices are still too low, and lace is not made where there is a competing industry, except by old people. The demand for good lace is also growing, but trade is so brisk that it is not at the present time worth a lace-maker's while to lose time over learning a new pattern, as she is willing to do at slack times. The inference may be drawn that if the brisk demand were taken advantage of, the price paid for good lace raised, and the commercial dealings properly organized, the industry could be put on a steadier footing. The fact that as many as ten buyers

¹ An instance was noted of a grocer who had in any case to visit villages, and therefore had no extra travelling expense, taking 5 per cent. only and selling to a lace school.

were visiting the same village speaks of great waste of time and money. A London dépôt for lace alone is extremely costly in proportion to the scope of the industry. But there is such a keen demand for dainty white work in the West End shops that fine Buckinghamshire lace, made up into well-cut garments, designed to show off the quality of the lace with no other trimming, would probably sell at prices which would repay the worker.¹ This would benefit the older women who have learnt the beautiful 'ground point' and typical Buckinghamshire patterns, who love the work and in many cases need the earnings.

Training

There are a few lace schools in existence, and a number of Buckinghamshire schools have applied for lace classes. There is a shortage of teachers, and traditional workers sometimes complain that the art is not properly taught in the schools. This is another piece of evidence to show the importance of teachers being willing to learn from local experts. It is hoped by promoters of these schools that children taught in their school days will take up the art some day when they are older.

But there are dangers in teaching children a trade which can be carried on at home. A schoolmaster's wife who introduced lace-making into the school was obliged to drop it for the sake of the children's health, because they were kept at their pillows in the evenings when they ought to have been playing out of doors. And by teaching the rudiments of a craft, a supply of cheap labour is created which could be employed for more useful ends. Lace is a luxury trade, and it is not in the interests of rural or national economy that able-bodied women should spend a considerable part of their time earning threepence or fourpence an hour in an unnecessary trade. The money earned is enough to tempt them from other occupations, and not enough to support them. It shows the urgency for some form of organization which shall prevent the exploitation of cheap rural labour. It has been said by people in the lace trade, that to force up the rates by means of government regulation would be fatal to the industry, and possibly if this were done suddenly much hardship would ensue. But the workers ought undoubtedly to be organized, and there are signs that they would be willing

¹ Throughout the war, the demand for fine lace and needlework on baby garments continued in spite of a drop in other luxury markets.

to join some form of 'Union'. The workers are not themselves represented on the Lace Associations as they certainly ought to be. The methods of sale are wasteful, both in the trade and in the voluntary associations. There are too many of the latter, and they depend too much on the chance of there being a person of business ability available. If children are taught, restrictions as to the sale of children's work may be necessary. There is a great deal to be said in favour of their being taught the traditional patterns. Lace-making is one of the methods by which 'lissomeness' so useful in needlework and in all kinds of handiwork can be acquired. The pleasure which the occupation gives to old or delicate people is evident, and the beautiful work of some of the older women is a proof that eyesight has not been impaired.

Workers whom the Industry would benefit, and suggestions with regard to Organization

The lace industry is not one that should be encouraged for a large number of rural women as a subsidiary occupation. Lace-makers in the past were renowned for their ill-health and pallor, even when the industry was 'flourishing'. But as a remunerative occupation for girls and women unfit for ordinary industrial life, it deserves to be encouraged, owing to the pleasure derived from the work and the beauty of the lace at its best. The organization of needlework and other crafts is undertaken by such philanthropic bodies as the Fine Needlework Association which has a dépôt in Beauchamp Place, London. By co-operation with the Lace Associations and the Women's Institutes, valuable service could be done to needy lace-makers and to others who are suited to the work. It would be well worth while to try the experiment of concentrating on the best workers and the best designs, paying a fair price for their skill and time, giving instructions and patterns where necessary, getting the lace made up on attractive articles by experts in design and cutting out, and getting into touch with a 'quality market'. All this has been tried, except for adequate payment. Probably the costs of putting lace on the market, which have prevented the voluntary organizers from being able to pay adequate rates for work, would still be prohibitive in any organization which dealt with lace alone. but if the same organization were dealing with other rural products, the costs would be distributed, and capitalization need not be so heavy as for the one industry alone. The

Voluntary Organizations have done valuable service, but they need co-ordinating. Dealers too have done valuable service, and it is quite possible that, if they were protected against risks involved in buying articles which have to wait for a market, their experience and commercial ability might be enlisted in economizing commercial costs and raising the quality of the work.

(f) Summary and Conclusions

The industries included in this Summary are gloving, ready-made clothing, knitting, lace-making. Dressmaking to order and designing, making and decorating of ladies' and children's blouses, frocks, &c., and other forms of fine needlework may also be conveniently considered in connexion with these. Gloving and ready-made clothing are part of a factory system, the workers being paid piece rates; knitters and lace-makers are 'independent' and sell their products. In the gloving and ready-made clothing trades conditions have greatly improved since the war owing to competition for labour, Trade Board action, and labour organization, together with good demand for output. In the case of gloves, development of the rural work, both at home and in small factories, is expanding, whereas in the case of tailoring, rural work is, so far as the existing firms are concerned, dying out, owing to the heavy costs involved in small-scale and scattered production, the increase and complexity of modern machinery and the decrease in the orders received by manufacturers. In knitting, the expense and poor quality of woven goods has increased the demand for machine and hand-knitted hosiery, &c., but knitters are unorganized and do not seem fitted to take advantage of the situation. The making of genuine Buckinghamshire lace is dying out with the older women. Earnings are very low, and it would be impossible for a woman who had not devoted the greater part of her school days to the lace pillow to earn a living wage at lace-making unless the rates could be doubled at least. There is a great demand for white needlework and embroidery, &c., of good quality, but in spite of the time and money devoted to the Buckinghamshire Lace Industry, sales are uncertain and irregular. There is a boom in the coarser pillow lace which is bought up by dealers, and new workers are being attracted to learn, as they can earn considerably more than on the fine lace.

The Voluntary Organizations have been, undoubtedly,

a blessing to the workers who have had a regular sale and immediate payment for all they could make, whereas when they sell to dealers trade is irregular. With regard to dressmaking in this neighbourhood no systematic investigation has yet been made though there are two to six dressmakers in many villages.¹ A few of the old smockers are still to be found who do beautiful work. In the course of investigation, however, certain facts have emerged and opinions have been recorded, which throw light on the possibilities of needlework industries if efficiently organized on co-operative lines.

Co-operative Organizations of Needlework and Similar Industries

Gloving, ready-made clothing, and knitting are all carried on by machinery, and are capable of expansion by means of power applied to small factories. The heavy type of clothing made in Oxford, however, is not suitable for rural production. Hand-knitting, lace, embroidery, and hand-sewing of gloves, are home industries. But in hand as in machine work the possibilities of the village workshop in providing companionship, economy in lighting and heating, and peace from family interruptions, as well as facilities for supervision and instruction, should not be overlooked. In gloving, the methods are combined ; the village workshop or factory is the centre of instruction and the dépôt for the work, but in order to make the organization pay, home workers are also employed. This arrangement, where the pay is adequate, is certainly popular amongst workers. The girls like the factory, but the mothers who cannot leave

¹ Village Dressmakers and Trade Board Regulations :

Village dressmakers give an example of how Trade Board regulations can fail to stamp out sweating. If there are as many as four or six dressmakers working independently in one village, they can undercut one another and then prevent one another from employing labour, which at the cut prices and the Trade Board rates would be too costly. Probably there is no more sweated class than the village dressmaker, who will sit up for long hours to finish an order, because her prices are far too low and she therefore takes more work than she can get through in reasonable working hours. She is an extremely useful person to the villagers, since she can turn old garments into new and cut down grown-ups' clothes for the children. A very useful work would be done by an organization which should supply the dressmakers with sufficient work for external sale so that they were steadily employed, and need not, therefore, take in more work than they could in times of a rush. They are apprenticed, often clever and skilled, and are very ready to learn. Their help should be enlisted in a scheme for developing needlework industries.

their homes like work which can be done at odd times at home, and for those who have time it appears to be valuable as a pleasant pastime. But the principle of supplementary work at a lower standard of payment for the leisure hours is dangerous. For an able-bodied woman it ought to be unnecessary. If she prefers to use her so-called 'leisure' in making articles for sale, she ought to be paid a fair price if the work is good. By taking as a criterion the economic soundness of an industry, its ability to support its workers at a living wage is obviously encouraged. Poor work of any kind is unsatisfactory from every point of view. Dealers are always ready to take advantage of cheap labour, and it is essential that home industries should only be organized on a basis of rates of payment which would afford a living to the normal workers for a normal day's work. Otherwise these 'pocket-money' workers will compete unfairly with others who are entirely dependent on this kind of work. On the other hand, the fact that knitting, lace, and gloves can be picked up at odd moments, do not take up the space of a machine, and can be taken out of doors and done whilst 'minding' the children, is an argument in favour of rather a lower scale of pay than should be maintained for more exacting work.

There is no reason why expert business ability should not be available for the voluntary societies which encourage the crafts, in spite of the fact that they have in the past been inclined to hold themselves aloof from ordinary trade as something tricky and degrading, not without reason. The importance and the method of securing a steady market is not always understood. An occasional exhibition is a useful and necessary form of advertisement and may secure orders; some effective system of distribution of goods through the trade is also necessary. But the expenses of establishing many small industries are prohibitive unless met by private means, and where an industry depends on an individual well-wisher who gives time and money, it is apt to collapse when this help is withdrawn. It may nevertheless be perfectly sound, only time being required to put it on a self-supporting basis. It is very possible that grants given to this or that particular industry in its early stages might have a similar result; it might collapse if the grant were withdrawn. The commercial side of rural industries is frequently under-capitalized. But real and valuable assistance could be given by promoting organization on co-operative lines, i. e. by encouraging co-ordination and

economy in buying and selling, by placing trade information at the disposal of organizers, by expert instruction not only in craftsmanship but in every branch of the business, and by making widely known the opportunities of the industries, keeping a register of proficient craftsmen and craftswomen, and standardizing wages and prices, with special provision for learners and sub-normal workers.

The making of garments with smocking, stichery, simple embroidery, knitting, lace, also glove-making and furriery could be organized in villages by a combination of factory or workshop work and part-time home work. Quite apart from monetary advantages, needlework is a pleasure and interest even to able-bodied women in their leisure, and to the disabled it is invaluable. The women who would chiefly benefit by organized rural industries are :

- (1) Old and elderly people who are left without sufficient means for independence.
- (2) Old or delicate people who need interest and occupation and would be glad of some extra money.
- (3) Delicate, disabled or other sub-normal people who must support themselves.
- (4) People with a certain amount of leisure who either need, or are glad of, pocket-money.

(5) Girls too young to go into service or other work or are needed at home, and need (a) occupation and interest ; (b) training which will be useful either in their work or their homes afterwards ; (c) money to help towards maintenance.

There are enough people in these categories to form an important part of the rural community. It would inflict hardship in many cases if prices and rates were fixed in such a way that these people should be precluded from earning. The problem is how to give them occupation without doing harm to others who are industrially employed. If the payment were as far as possible standardized on the basis of the earnings per hour of the normal worker working under normal conditions, it would be possible to pay the sub-normal worker or learner according to her ability, and in necessitous cases to supplement it. The societies which already exist for helping these cases, i. e. giving work, holidays, and sometimes a home, to invalids, could be assisted and their work correlated and extended. In every county a register could be kept on which all sub-normal and disabled workers should be invited to enter their names. Voluntary workers could be enlisted to visit the cases in

their locality, existing agencies being used where practicable. Particulars of the workers' abilities could be registered. Material and machines could be bought on good terms, and dépôts established for distributing and collecting the work. The Women's Institutes, Girls' Friendly Society, Charity Organization Society, the schools, the Workers' and Garment Makers' Unions could all be invited to help. It is not suggested that the organization should touch invalids or old people only, but any who are in real need of this kind of employment, or who could be productively employed in it. The Federation of Women's Institutes have arranged useful courses, e. g. in rabbit-skin glove-making, rush basket-making, &c., but it seems that in many cases the women who learn to make these things are not really in need of the employment and are too busy to keep it up. Industries have sometimes been encouraged at the expense of other important work. The Institute is a valuable channel for instruction. and the atmosphere of a good Women's Institute is favourable to co-operative enterprise. And considering the great part played by personal reputation and credit in rural businesses, the 'goodwill' of an organization such as the Women's Institutes is a real business asset. This development has greatly improved the prospect for rural industries, and has shown how they can be organized. But the improved agricultural wage has done even more, for it has taken away from the workers the necessity to compete and undercut one another for a 'sweated wage' to eke out the weekly earnings for a scanty livelihood.

Possibilities of development of needlework industries

Four retailers of clothing were visited in Oxford and consulted as to the likelihood of a steady demand for well-cut and well-designed children's clothes. Two of these wished to see samples, one laying stress on the high standard, good finish, and accurate cutting required ; the others stating that a great variety of styles would be needed : it was difficult to get the type of clothing they required, and they preferred not to stock more than a quarter or half a dozen of one style, these to be cut in different sizes. This firm would prefer to supply its own material. Both were expanding their own workshops for this kind of work. A third stated that clothes made in the neighbourhood would be of no use to them. The buyer in the fourth pointed out the great difficulties to be faced. From the samples

which he already had for next spring (he was visited in August) it could be seen at a glance how useless it would be to attempt to compete with power-driven machinery in the cheap lines. He explained that these would be turned out in huge quantities, the material in one colour alone being purchased by the thousand yards. The only hope would be to make a 'specialty'. If, however, power were to be installed in local factories it would be a different matter. He would be glad to give any help he could. As a business speculation it would be a risky one. He sells a certain amount of Irish knitting, but amateurs do not realize the importance of exactness in quotations of sizes, &c. As to demand, if shown two articles of identical quality, purchasers at the present time choose the more expensive, imagining it to be better or smarter, such is their ignorance as compared with their mothers. But this state of things would not last; when there was less money people would have to buy the cheapest they could get.

The secretaries of two County Fruit and Vegetable Societies see possibilities in a scheme for distribution and collective marketing of village needlework. One stated that it would be a distinct advantage to his society if the vans used for collecting market produce, of which there is not always enough to pay the transport expenses, could also be utilized for distribution and collection of other articles. The dépôt for these would have to be close to the dépôt for garden produce in each village, to avoid waste of time in collecting. The other thought it a matter which might be taken up by the Women's Institutes. The great difficulty in these collecting schemes is the poor quality of much of the produce and the failure of the villagers to realize the importance of the appearance and condition of their vegetables, &c. All are agreed that the articles must be of good quality so that the prices can support the expenses of organizing small-scale industry.

Another difficulty lies in the rapid changes of fashion and consequent instability of the market for clothing. Retailers dare not give large contracts because as soon as a big manufacturer pushes a new style by engineering the fashion, stocks are left on hand which can only be sold at less than cost price. Hence the huge prices asked for fashionable clothes whilst in season.

Briefly, the difficulties are uncertainty of demand, expense of transport, &c., and the need for skill in cutting out, designing, finished workmanship, and expert knowledge in

accurate grading and quotation of sizes, styles, &c. But if capital were available and good salaries are offered for first-rate designers, cutters and business managers and instructors, all these difficulties might be met. They must be considered separately.

(1) *Demand*

There is an important distinction between a luxury and quality market. It is obviously unwise to attempt to cater for an unstable luxury market. It is on the other hand useless to compete in goods which are turned out satisfactorily in huge quantities from big factories with power-driven machines. But in clothing there is necessarily a good deal of hand-work, and the public which demands individuality, tasteful simplicity, good cut and decoration done by hand, is increasing rapidly. Education by means of Infant Welfare Centres and Mothercraft Schools is improving the taste of working women in the same direction. At present the demand for embroidery and embroidered garments cannot be met. The question is how to get the workers in touch with the market with the utmost economy in organization.

Exactly the same problem arises in other rural crafts. Carpenters often make beautiful furniture and smiths do beautiful iron work of a kind for which there is plenty of demand, but they have little opportunity of coming into contact with it. For disabled men or men unfit for heavy work light craft work is useful, both for its curative and pecuniary value. The remedy would be to establish local dépôts for the sale of local products in good shopping centres and places frequented by visitors. Oxford, for instance, would be an excellent centre. But isolated dépôts would be of little use. They should be linked up with one another and a clearing-house established in connexion with a London dépôt, special regard being paid to export facilities. Such industries as already have London dépôts derive great benefit, but expense would be minimized if these were better co-ordinated. They cannot in any case take the place of local dépôts, which have the advantage of local interests.

The question whether the establishment of new dépôts would be better than making use of existing business houses is difficult. Granted real business ability, the new dépôt would probably be best, for an ordinary business firm will not tell its customers where its wares are produced. The

special interest of locality in the case of crafts adds a very real value, and such names as Thames Riverside Rush Industries, Cotswold Elf, Bowls from Turners' Green, &c., are attractive. There is a still more important educative value. One of the serious rural problems is the lack of intelligence on the part of the village shopkeepers. They have little opportunity of comparing and judging of the value of goods ; they are supplied by commercial travellers and have not much variety to choose from. And sales are still made at the cottage and farmhouse door on a system of credit and instalment which is certainly a temptation to extravagance to village girls and women. An existing village shop might be made the dépôt of local produce, or a special shop established. It would be the distributing and collecting centre, keeping in touch with a larger dépôt in the market town, which again would combine the functions of retail house and clearing-house, the principle of organization being to meet local requirements and to dispose of the surplus in the best market. Further, if it pays a commercial business to send round agents to the villages for the sale of all kinds of goods from sewing-machines and coats and skirts to buttons and boot-laces, it might pay to use the collecting vans for the distribution of finished products. The trade methods, e. g. the use of buyers and commercial travellers, could be adopted with great economy by a co-operative society for all kinds of suitable rural produce. Dairies send milk vans long distances for the collection of milk, and the development of motor traffic has provided the needed channel between the villages along the main routes. For the improvement of the village shop we may certainly look to better education as the surest means. When children are trained in co-operative methods while still at school they will apply them later to trade and production, and the best kind of business ability, i. e. the power of meeting peoples' wants promptly and economically, will be commoner.

(2) *Transport*

It has already been suggested that collecting vans already in use should be employed in distributing and collecting needlework. Where villages are away from the route, carriers could connect them with a convenient dépôt. It must be remembered with regard to transport that the articles should be light and compact in relation to their value, as in the case of fur and leather gloves.

(3) Designing and Cutting. Instruction

It would be absolutely necessary to employ an experienced cutter who could cut to scale and grade the sizes accurately. In order, however, to give the amplest possible scope to local talent, he or she should be ready to make use of the local dressmakers, who would be valuable as organizers and supervisors in their own villages. The dressmakers have usually served an apprenticeship but would probably be thankful for the opportunity of further instruction. The same principle applies to design. If the industry is to develop healthily, originality in design should be encouraged. If the articles are to be strictly uniform they had far better be made in a large factory. There must, of course, be uniformity to a certain extent, in order to make it possible to sell in bulk, but the uniformity to be aimed at should be in accurate cutting, good quality, and careful finish, rather than in colouring and design. The very strength of a rural industry is that it is done under conditions which are favourable to originality and artistic growth ; the small workshop and not the large factory is the nursery of art. It is true that 'Arts and Crafts' organizers have seldom succeeded in getting good or passable designs from the workers, but what has been impossible in the past may be easy in the future. The dearth of artistic talent is partly the result of our neglect of art in education ; it has made us as a nation suffer slums gladly, and has also deprived us of invaluable sources of healthy enjoyment. Part of the instruction should be in the principles of design, in form, colour, and decoration. The result of such teaching where given becomes apparent in increased interest and better workmanship, even if it fails to evoke originality. The staff of the local Education Authority would have to be enlarged and instruction could be arranged through Women's Institutes. This is already being done, but there is a shortage of teachers, and special training for teachers would probably be necessary.

In considering the expense of instruction, it must be remembered that even if the industry is unable to bear the expense involved, it is well worth undertaking. First, because women like needlework. Secondly, because it is advisable to give the best training in home-making. It is difficult to get girls to take sufficient trouble to become skilled in an occupation which they only look upon as temporary and expect to cease with marriage. Even if they

do not marry, there are a variety of good openings for first-rate needlewomen as well as for other branches of house-wifery. The important point is that it should be 'first-rate'. With the difficulty of finding suitable employment for young country girls near home, the educational aspect of rural industry should be kept in sight. If a village industry helped to provide employment and the means of livelihood to young people in a group of villages while they were receiving continued education under the new Act, and at the same time provided training for the future, it would more than justify its existence. Many mothers fear to send their young girls away to face town life or life in domestic service at the delicate and immature age of fourteen, and yet cannot afford to keep them at home unless they are earning. If the houses are enlarged and improved, the establishment of village workshops and even the organization of home-work would meet the difficulty. The preference of girls for factory rather than home-work should be remembered ; and the gloving and ready-made clothing industries give examples of how large-scale production, in the matter of cutting out and other processes, can be combined with small-scale production under the same firm.

For the establishment of a needlecraft industry in a county, at least two well-paid organizers would be necessary : a business manager and a practical superintendent of the work. The peripatetic teachers of the Education Authorities could also be utilized ; this arrangement would have the advantage of connecting the instruction given in the schools with the development of the industry.

Existing organizations should be used, but the control should be in the hands of a business manager engaged for the purpose. The same manager might also be in charge of other co-operative societies, or it might be better, as in the case of a poultry and egg society which is managed by a prominent and enterprising grocer in the market town, to put a retailer, with a ready-made connexion, in charge of the organization at first.

Accounts should be accurately kept not only at the centre, but in every village, and books should be available for inspection in order to ensure that the rates of pay are satisfactory, and the whole management economical. Instruction in keeping accounts would be a great help to organizers of village industries, and the keeping and production of accounts should be a condition of any grants received.

Capital for opening dépôts, meeting salaries at the beginning, and buying in bulk, &c., will be necessary. One of the difficulties mentioned by amateurs is the unwillingness of big firms to supply them direct with material or to allow any reduction on a quantity. A central body which could secure good terms and hold stocks, both of material and of products, would be necessary. Such a body would also be in a position to give advice as to the state of the market and new openings ; it could disperse the products over a wide market so that a certain sameness would not interfere with the customer's desire not to be dressed exactly like her neighbours ; it could also advertise with greater economy than the local organizations. At the same time it need not hamper local initiative nor supersede voluntary effort. In order to secure the best results, there should be co-operation both locally and centrally between the education authorities, the agricultural departments, and the employment bureaux.

The scheme here worked out for needlework could be adapted for other crafts, especially for such crafts as supply the needs of the home, for it is in household goods, toys, upholstery, light furniture, &c., as well as in clothing, that diversity and originality are demanded. The need for originality must be borne in mind, for when the models come to be copied in large-scale production, it will be necessary for the workers to have the power of striking a new line.

Survival of Weaving and Hand-looms

The weaving for which Berkshire was famous before the woollen industries migrated to the West and North, where more rapid streams gave greater water power, and later, where coal and iron were near, survives only in the Witney blanket and the Chipping Norton cloth factories, the carpets of Abingdon, the plush of Shutford, and the hand-woven headpieces for halters which are made at the old rope-works in several small towns. At Oxford hand-woven materials are made, some of the workers being blind and disabled people, and there is a good sale for their work. It seems advisable to defer reporting on new or revived weaving industries until other examples have been studied. The cloth and blanket factories are in no sense rural, except for their situation in an agricultural district. It is interesting to know that the Chipping Norton cloth factory used at one time to turn out horse cloth. There are a few hand-looms

here, called pattern looms, new patterns being woven in small pieces on these. But the hand pattern looms are being superseded by power pattern looms with a special device suited to the purpose of weaving many patterns on one piece. In the Abingdon Carpet Works only hand-looms are used, and the weavers are mostly old men who are content to work as they have worked in the past though their earnings are not high. The Thames rushes are woven into the Isis matting, which is a speciality of this firm ; each rush is pushed through the warp, which is of yarn. These looms are worked by women. It cannot be known whether the demand for hand-woven English carpets can survive the increasing cost of production for long. At the little village of Shutford, five miles from Banbury, plush is made both on power and on hand-looms for a varied demand. Before the war all the Courts of Europe were clothed on state occasions in Oxfordshire plush from Shutford or Banbury. The seats of the English Houses of Parliament are upholstered in Shutford plush. Brilliant patterns were shown of pieces sent to Turkey and Roumania, but it could not be foretold whether this connexion would be worked up again. Dyeing used at one time to be done at Shutford, but now the material for the plush, silk, cotton, or mohair is dyed elsewhere. The power-looms are run by a twenty-horse-power suction gas-engine, supplied by Tangyes of Birmingham, which effects a great saving in fuel ; the manager stated that the gas product of one ton of coal was used in three weeks as against three or four tons of coal a week by the steam engine used formerly. The hand-looms are used principally for a very strong mohair plush, supplied to cotton mills, where it is put on rollers to which the fabric clings in the process of weaving. There is a good demand for this plush. The machine-made plush is woven double ; two pieces worked face to face on the loom are cut apart as the weaving proceeds, leaving the pile standing out on the inner surface. The pile of hand-woven plush has to be shaved by hand. Beautifully made shears and shuttles used in the industry are the products of bygone craftsmen of the district. Plush is no longer made in Banbury itself, the only survival of weaving here being webbing for horses' halters.

There are several examples of horses' halter-heads being woven by hand at rope-works, where the only ropes still made are the short pieces used for the reins of these halters. At one rope-walk long pieces were being turned out by three

generations in a family business who also spin their yarn, but rope-making has for the most part departed to sea-ports and larger towns where machinery is used. Short lengths are twisted by means of a jack to which the ends are fastened. Boys do this work ; girls who weave the webbing do not like dipping their hands in the size used in making rope. The looms are simple and primitive in character and could easily be made by a carpenter. One end is fixed to a wall at a convenient height for handling and the other on a stand on the floor. The halter-heads are woven in a piece about six feet long. The warp passes backwards and forwards in one piece, round a screw at each end, the loops at either end being gathered when the weaving is done and button-holed with string into strong round eyelets. It is the strength of these eyelets, not obtainable in a halter made of cut lengths of webbing which fray at the ends, which accounts for the survival of this industry. When the industry was investigated the workers were poorly paid, and it was suffering from severe competition from the East End, but it has recently come under a Trade Board. Though there is a keen demand for these hand-woven halters, a local employer found it impossible to compete in the wholesale market because only two of his girls would work and keep up the output. He had, therefore, dismissed the others. He said that large firms where a forewoman could keep the girls in order were supplying the wholesale market. The rates were so low before the Trade Board that the industry was not likely to attract good workers. Another reason given for the survival is that it is worth the while of a man in a small way of business to make certain articles himself where the demand is not great enough for him to purchase large quantities wholesale. Thus a rope and yarn dealer will get some of his yarn woven into halter heads though he buys all his rope. Halter-makers are in some cases employed by ironmongers. The survival of this interesting industry points to a possibility that it might pay to make small articles, such as girdles, hat-bands, children's reins, on hand-looms where lengths of cloth would not pay. It would be worth while to give these halter-weavers the opportunity and encouragement to learn to adapt their skill and their looms to making various objects, in good colouring and interesting patterns, for their own use or for sale, for constant work on the same material and in the same colour is very monotonous. It takes about twenty minutes to weave a headpiece for a halter.

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